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Research Article

Measuring motives for YouTube video consumption: An updated uses and gratifications scale and the impact of past view counts on users' viewing decisions

YouTube video tüketim motivasyonlarını ölçmek: Güncellenmiş bir kullanımlar ve doyumlar ölçeği ve geçmiş izlenme sayılarının kullanıcıların izleme kararları üzerindeki etkisi

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Abstract

This study investigates the motivations behind YouTube usage among Turkish-speaking users. Based on the Uses and Gratifications Theory, a scale was developed from focus group findings and an extensive literature review. The survey, conducted with 105 participants, identified four primary motivations: (1) Convenient Entertainment, (2) Convenient Information Seeking, (3) Content Control and Social Interaction, and (4) Escapism, Loneliness, and Telepresence. Entertainment emerged as the most potent motivator, while the influence of social and emotional factors was found to be lower, and video view counts had a limited impact on viewing preferences. This study confirms that established motivations broadly apply to Turkish-speaking users and identifies Content Control and Social Interaction as a dimension, highlighting the significance of users' agency in content selection within this demographic. Additionally, it reveals telepresence as a unique sub-dimension within the Realm of Escapism. The findings emphasise that content control and immersive experiences play a key role in this demographic. By uncovering these dynamics, the study provides a more refined and comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing YouTube viewing behaviour overall.

Keywords: Digital Media Consumption, Uses and Gratifications Theory, Social Interaction and Media

Jel Codes: M31, L82, D83

Öz

Bu çalışma, Türkçe konuşan kullanıcıların YouTube kullanım motivasyonlarını araştırmaktadır. Kullanımlar ve Doyumlar Teorisi temel alınarak, odak grup bulguları ve kapsamlı bir literatür taramasından yola çıkarak bir ölçek geliştirilmiştir. 105 katılımcı ile gerçekleştirilen anket çalışmasında dört ana motivasyon belirlenmiştir: (1) Kolay Erişilebilir Eğlence, (2) Kolay Erişilebilir Bilgi Arayışı, (3) İçerik Üzerinde Kontrol ve Sosyal Etkileşim ve (4) Kaçış, Yalnızlık ve Televarlık. Eğlence en güçlü motivasyon olarak öne çıkarken, sosyal ve duygusal faktörlerin etkisi daha düşük bulunmuş, video izlenme sayılarının izleme tercihleri üzerinde sınırlı bir etkisi olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Bu çalışma, yerleşik motivasyonların Türkçe konuşan kullanıcılar için de geçerli olduğunu doğrulamakta ve daha derin bir analizle, İçerik ve Sosyal Etkileşim Üzerinde Kontrol'ü bir boyut olarak tanımlayarak, bu demografide kullanıcıların platform kullanımı üzerindeki yetkinliğinin motivasyondaki önemini vurgulamaktadır. Ayrıca, Kaçış boyutu içinde televarlık unsurunu yeni bir alt boyut olarak ortaya konmaktadır. Bu bulgular, YouTube içerik kontrolü ve sürükleyici deneyimlerin bu demografi için önemli olduğunu göstermektedir ve YouTube içerik tüketimine yönlendiren faktörlere dair daha derin ve incelikli bir anlayış sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dijital Medya Tüketimi, Kullanımlar ve Doyumlar Teorisi, Sosyal Etkileşim ve Medya

Jel Kodları: M31, L82, D83

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Introduction

In the digital age, video-sharing platforms like YouTube transformed the way people consume and engage with content globally. The platform currently has over 2.5 billion monthly active users, demonstrating its extensive reach and impact on social interaction and online video consumption (Statista, 2024). With the help of advertisements, YouTube has become an attractive platform for creators. Online entrepreneurs and influencers had the opportunity to thrive as a result of this change. According to U.S. teenagers, the top YouTube creators are considered more popular than traditional celebrities such as music artists and movie stars (Ault, 2014). Furthermore, YouTube is not only a platform for amateur content creators. The content creators vary from large media producers such as television channels and sports companies. Although YouTube is a strong platform for diverse content, it does not create content itself (Burgess & Green, 2018). It is a meta-business, as David Weinberger (2007) calls it. In this category of business, the platform enhances the value of information created elsewhere, thereby benefiting the creators of that information.

In recent years, research has increasingly focused on understanding why users choose specific types of digital content, particularly as motivations for media consumption evolve in response to technological advancements and platform changes (Haridakis & Hanson, 2009). YouTube has undergone significant transformations, including the introduction of new video formats like Shorts, increased mobile usage due to the advent of 5G, and advancements in AR/VR technologies, all of which have likely influenced user motivations. However, existing motivation scales may not fully capture these recent shifts, highlighting the need for a refined and updated measurement framework.

Grounded in the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), this study aims to identify and integrate emerging motivations for YouTube consumption, ensuring that measurement tools remain relevant to contemporary user behaviours. To achieve this, we first conducted a qualitative exploration with Turkish users, leveraging practical accessibility to gain insights into any potential new motives that may have been overlooked in prior research. While the motivations for YouTube consumption among Turkish users remain underexplored, the primary goal of this study is not to create a region-specific scale but to refine existing models based on qualitative findings and assess their applicability to broader audiences.

By applying this updated scale to Turkish YouTube users, we examine how newly identified motivational factors influence engagement and whether these findings align with or differ from global trends and the existing research with Turkish users. This approach contributes to both theoretical advancements in UGT-based media research and practical applications for digital content creators, marketers, and platform strategists.

YouTube was selected for this study due to its interactive and participatory nature, aligning with the active audience perspective of the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT). As an active platform, YouTube allows users to freely select, engage with, and interpret content based on their needs, making it essential to examine the motivations behind their viewing choices. UGT emphasises that audiences actively choose media to fulfil specific gratifications rather than passively consuming content (Fiske, 1996).

Additionally, YouTube's versatile ecosystem accommodates a diverse range of users, from independent creators to traditional media outlets (Burgess & Green, 2018). Its algorithm-driven recommendation system (Covington et al., 2016) significantly influences user behaviour, further reinforcing the need to study why and how users choose to watch certain videos.

From a practical perspective, while TikTok is another dominant video platform in Turkey, it primarily attracts Generation Z users, whereas YouTube appeals to a broader and more diverse audience (We Are Social & Meltwater, 2023). Since our study involved an older and more varied population, YouTube was the most suitable platform for examining video consumption motives. However, we acknowledge that future research could explore similar motivations on platforms like TikTok, where user engagement patterns may differ.

Our study addresses two primary questions: (1) What core motivations drive individuals to use YouTube? and (2) How much does the number of previous views on a YouTube video affect a user's decision to watch it? By asking these questions, the study aims to gain a deeper understanding of the specific motives that drive Turkish users to engage with media content on YouTube, offering fresh perspectives on global media consumption trends.

We conducted a thorough literature review to explore these questions, encompassing both YouTube-specific research and the broader UGT framework. UGT offers insight into how people actively seek

media content to satisfy their needs, including those for information, entertainment, escape, and socialisation (Katz et al., 1973; Rubin, 2009). Prior studies (Haridakis & Hanson, 2009; Bondad-Brown et al., 2012) extend this understanding to digital platforms. They have identified YouTube's unique role in providing information, interaction, and co-viewing experiences alongside entertainment.

Building on these foundations, we conducted focus groups to gain a nuanced view of why people consume YouTube content. These discussions brought to light some motivations that hadn't been fully explored before. Based on our findings, we revised an established UGT scale for YouTube content consumption designed to capture these specific motivations more accurately. After refining and testing the scale, we confirmed that it covered a broad range of motivations that draw users to YouTube, offering a richer view of what keeps users engaged on the platform.

This paper guides readers through the study's approach to uncovering motivations for watching YouTube videos. We begin with a literature review as the theoretical foundation of the study. This is followed by the methodology detailing our use of focus groups to reveal core motivations, which informed the refinement of an existing UGT scale. The scale was then validated through a broad survey to collect quantitative data on these motivations. Our results present a factor analysis that identifies distinct motivations and examines the impact of previous view counts on engagement. The study concludes by putting the findings in the context of earlier research on media consumption, offering explanations for YouTube's unique appeal and suggesting directions for future research on YouTube content consumption. The findings provide practical insights for content creators seeking to connect with audiences on a personal and culturally relevant level.

Literature review

Review of uses and gratifications scales for media and internet usage

The Uses-and-Gratifications Theory is one of the main theories in communication that helps understand media usage motives. Uses-and-Gratifications is a social and psychological theory that suggests human communication behaviour is driven by people's needs and desires (e.g., Katz et al.,1973; Rosengren, 1974). We communicate and use the media to satisfy those needs and desires. Ever since the field of mass communication began, researchers have been asking: Why do people use media, for what purpose, and with what outcome? (Berelson, 1949; Herzog, 1942). This effort to understand the origins of media use, context, and consequences shifted the focus away from messages to audiences. The distinction between uses-and-gratifications and media effects is captured in the often-used phrase that uses-and-gratifications research does not ask "What does media do to people?" but instead asks "What do people do with media?" (Katz & Foulkes, 1962; Jones, 2010).

To set some background, it is essential to see the progress of the users-and-gratifications approach: Though the "why" of media use was examined in the 1930s and 1940s, it was not until the late 1950s and early 1960s that the terms "uses," "motives," and "gratifications" began to be used jointly and formally (Katz & Foulkes, 1962; McLeod et al., 1965; Schramm et al., 1959).

Early on, UGT was rooted in functionalism, as expressed by Wright (1960). Wright built on Lasswell's (1960) three functions of media: surveillance (meeting information needs), correlation of society (addressing editorial needs), and the transmission of social heritage (fulfilling socialisation needs), and added entertainment to the list. The functional aspect of the theory considers "the individual as a system, as in uses-and-gratifications research, [and] elements of the system could include needs, motives, values, attitudes, interests, desires, tastes, behaviours, and the like" (Rubin, 1986). At its most basic, uses-and-gratifications theory posits that individuals differentially select and use media that competes with other sources to gratify some self-realised need (Rubin, 1986). Uses-and-gratifications research attempts to explain the motives for media consumption, how that use is gratifying, and to identify the functions and consequences that follow from that media use. The premise is grounded on the suppositions that 1) audiences actively 2) choose media in a goal-directed and purposeful act, 3) they link that media consumption with a need for gratification although 4) media competes with other gratification sources, and, finally, 5) that audience members are self-aware of their media motives and, thus, this process can be measured by self-reports (Katz et al., 1973; Jones, 2010).

Criticisms of early uses-and-gratifications research focus on the fact that it (a) relied heavily on self-reports, (b) was unsophisticated about the social origin of the needs that audiences bring to the media, (c) was too uncritical of the possible dysfunction both for self and society of certain kinds of audience satisfaction and (d) was too captivated by the inventive diversity of audiences used to pay attention to the constraints of the text (Ruggiero, 2000).

Ruggiero (2000) asserts that the emergence of computer-mediated communication has revived the

significance of the uses and gratifications approach. Uses-and-gratifications have always provided a cutting-edge theoretical approach in the initial stages of each new mass communication medium: newspapers, radio, television, and now the Internet (Ruggiero, 2000). In this study, key concepts from the uses-and-gratifications framework include understanding the differences between interpersonal and media-related motives, examining how individuals cognitively organise and perceive the attributes and functions of new technological tools, and recognising the value of the uses-and-gratifications approach in analysing emerging media within an ever-evolving mediated landscape. Beginning in the mid-1980s, scholars turned to the uses-and-gratifications framework as online bulletin boards, VCRs, cable television, and home Internet services were being introduced and adopted into use (Ball-Rokeach & Reardon, 1988; James et al., 1995; Perse & Rubin, 1990). With these new media technologies, uses-and-gratifications research enjoyed a resurgence for two reasons: its assumption of an active audience lent itself well to understanding "the self-motivated, goal-oriented, and gratifications-expected audience" (Lin, 1996) and its openness conceptually and methodologically was thought to help examine a variety of motives within emergent and diverse media platforms (Bryant & Miron, 2004; Jones, 2010).

Haridakis and Hanson (2009) thoroughly summarise how users and gratifications have been applied to the new media: Rubin and Rubin (2001) argued that people can use media to satisfy interpersonal needs and communication to satisfy media-related needs. The Internet, in particular, is both an interpersonal and mass communication medium (Flanagin & Metzger, 2001). Prior Internet research has identified both traditional media-related motives and interpersonal motives for using the Internet. Media-related motives include entertainment (Ebersole, 2000; Kaye & Johnson, 2002; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Wolfradt & Doll, 2001), information seeking (Ebersole, 2000; Kaye & Johnson, 2002; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Sjöberg, 1999; Wolfradt & Doll, 2001), and passing time or alleviating boredom (Ebersole, 2000; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000).

Previous research on the factors motivating YouTube watching and YouTube video view counts on viewing behaviour

Studies on YouTube viewing motives have been showing an increase recently, and uses-and-gratifications have been applied to YouTube usage some studies so far (Haridakis & Hanson, 2009; Hanson & Haridakis, 2008; Silaban et al., 2022; Rosenthal, 2018; Kim, 2023; Klobas, 2018; İlhan & Aydoğdu, 2019; Biçer & Şener, 2020) and some focus on a subset of YouTube content watching motives, i.e., news. Nevertheless, it is challenging to assert that a consensus exists on the motives that predict YouTube viewing.

As mentioned earlier, YouTube content originates from two primary sources: traditional mass media (e.g., television, films) and user-generated material uploaded by individual creators. A key question that arises is whether the motives identified in earlier research on traditional media consumption—such as entertainment, information-seeking, arousal, habit, passing time, escape, and relaxation (Rubin, 2009)—are equally relevant to YouTube consumption (Haridakis & Hanson, 2009). Haridakis and Hanson (2009) suggest that these motivations do influence YouTube viewing behaviour.

Further research into video consumption on mobile devices highlights drivers such as entertainment, boredom relief, music, and information-seeking as significant factors (Haridakis & Hanson, 2009). Within informational motivations, distinctions are made between specific areas of interest, including education, health, and news. Bondad-Brown et al. (2012) found that while online video consumption places greater emphasis on informational motivations compared to traditional television, emotional drivers remain similarly influential across both platforms.

Emotions have a significant impact on how people engage with videos. Research by Pirouz et al. (2015) indicates that videos with emotional content tend to receive higher engagement. Myrick (2015) found that many viewers seek out videos—such as cat videos—specifically to boost their mood or unwind.

Users' goals significantly influence their viewing habits, especially on mobile devices, where quick access to information and flexible engagement with content are crucial. However, further research is needed to understand how these goals impact user expectations of mobile platforms and how effectively those expectations are met. Users' studies are encouraged to explore how mobile video consumption intersects with evolving user needs, intent, and emotional regulation (de Oliveira et al., 2018).

Researchers explored the interactive affordances offered by platforms like YouTube, where features such as commenting facilitate communication and foster relationships among users with common interests (Kim, 2023). Research on why people use YouTube often points to two primary motivations: practical reasons, such as finding information, and enjoyment, including watching for entertainment. However, the extent to which each of these matters depends on different factors can vary.

Research confirms that seeking information and pursuing entertainment is essential for YouTube viewers (Hanson et al., 2008; Biçer & Şener, 2020). Hanson et al. also note that watching videos for information-seeking and entertainment is one of the reasons why young adults watch news videos on YouTube. Another study found that, in the context of travel vlogs, YouTube use was driven by both information-seeking and entertainment (Silaban et al., 2022).

Nevertheless, some key differences are surfacing in the research according to 5 factors:

Video category influences motivation: Viewers tend towards informational motives when watching videos from categories like education, how-to, product Reviews, and news. At the same time, they are more likely to be driven by entertainment motives when watching comedy, gaming, and music videos (Hanson, 2008; Kim, 2023)

User age appears to affect motivation: Younger viewers generally prefer entertainment-focused content, while older audiences are more inclined to seek information (Köktener, 2020). However, this trend isn't consistently observed across all studies, so additional research could provide a clear picture of how age and other demographic factors influence YouTube use (Hanson, 2008; Kim, 2023).

Context of use shapes motivation: How people use YouTube can influence what they're looking for. Someone searching for specific information approaches the platform with a clear purpose and a sense of urgency, while someone just looking for entertainment may be more open to browsing a variety of content. For instance, a user wanting to learn a new skill might be more motivated to watch instructional videos, and another user seeking relaxation might prefer humorous content (de Oliveira et al., 2018).

Sharing motivations differ from viewing motivations: Although information and entertainment are essential in drawing viewers, people often share videos for more personal reasons, like expressing themselves, influencing others, or connecting with people who share their interests (Hanson, 2008). Previous research indicates that users are likely to share videos that reflect their social relationships, enhance their reputation, or facilitate conversations (Hanson, 2008; Kim,2023; Chiang, 2015).

*The strength of motivation varies: One study foun*d that entertainment motives had a stronger association with compulsive YouTube use compared to informational motives (Klobas, 2018). Similarly, another research found that the entertainment dimension had a more significant impact on customer engagement than information seeking in the context of travel vlogs (Silaban et al., 2022).

Also, in addition to the literature mentioned above on YouTube watching motivations, previous YouTube video view counts were analysed in one comprehensive study as an antecedent to predict the watching decision; in this study made with UK-based users, users reported that they were not strongly influenced by a video's popularity or other users' reactions when choosing to watch. The study found that people were more likely to decide to watch a video based on elements such as its title and thumbnail image rather than the number of previous views (Foster, 2020).

Method

Purpose and importance of the study

This study aims to refine and update existing motivation scales for YouTube consumption within the framework of Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) to ensure they capture the nuanced and evolving motivations behind YouTube usage. Given that the platform has undergone significant transformations, such as the introduction of new video formats like Shorts, increased mobile usage due to 5G, and advancements in AR/VR technologies, existing scales may no longer fully reflect current user behaviours and motivations. This study aims to identify and integrate previously overlooked or emerging motivations, providing a more comprehensive understanding of why users engage with YouTube content today.

To achieve this, we first conducted a qualitative exploration with Turkish users, leveraging practical accessibility to gain insights into potential new motives that may not have been captured in prior research. However, our goal was not to develop a Turkish-specific scale but rather to update and expand existing measurement tools based on contemporary digital consumption patterns. Once the revised scale was established, we used it to measure the motivations of Turkish YouTube users, assessing whether the newly identified motives applied to a broader audience and how they shaped user engagement.

Additionally, while the motivations for YouTube consumption among Turkish users remain underexplored, this study primarily contributes to the broader literature by enhancing existing theoretical models and ensuring that motivation scales remain relevant to current digital media

environments. The findings provide insights not only into Turkish users' behaviours but also into how YouTube's evolving features and technological advancements impact audience engagement globally.

Lastly, this research contributes to the literature by examining how past view counts influence users' video selection decisions. This factor has received limited attention in previous UGT-based YouTube studies. Understanding the role of view counts in shaping user choices adds a new dimension to digital consumption research, offering insights into the cognitive and behavioural mechanisms behind video engagement.

By addressing these gaps, this study offers a more refined and up-to-date motivational framework that can benefit academics, content creators, and industry professionals in better understanding the evolving dynamics of video-based content consumption.

Scale development

Qualitative studies

The literature review provided a solid foundation, but there remains a need to delve deeper into the topic and incorporate more recent insights. It would be more appropriate to explore the issue through qualitative and verbal analyses, as this approach has also been employed in various studies on media consumption motives (Haridakis & Hanson, 2009) before developing a new scale. Qualitative studies have been conducted because they are a fruitful method for idea generation.

The appropriate method for the construct chosen was conducting a focus group study. Using focus groups allows us to gather insights directly from participants as they interact and discuss, which is especially useful in a field that hasn't been widely studied.

In summary, two focus group studies were conducted for this research.

Focus Groups

Focus Group 1:

The first focus group included five participants: four professionals and one master's student, all between the ages of 25 and 32. The group had a balanced gender mix, with two females and three males, and all participants were college graduates. The participants had diverse occupations—engineer, banker, sports trainer, and maritime worker—bringing a variety of perspectives despite sharing a similar age range. Consistent with Morgan's (1998) recommendation for using homogenous groups of strangers in focus group settings, the participants. However, the researcher's acquaintances had no prior interactions with one another before the study session.

Following a brief introduction to the research topic, the researcher began with general questions to engage participants and ease them into the discussion, such as "Do you watch YouTube videos?" and "Why do you watch YouTube videos?" This initial phase helped participants become familiar with the subject, after which a funnelling technique was employed to gradually direct the discussion toward more specific aspects of YouTube viewing behaviour (Morgan, 1998). Key questions included: "What types of videos do you prefer watching?" "How does watching YouTube make you feel?" "Are you subscribed to any channels?" and "Does the view count of a video influence your choice to watch it?"

To gain deeper insights, laddering was applied through prompts like, "Can you describe more?" or "What exactly do you mean by 'educational benefit?'" This approach allowed the researcher to explore participants' responses in depth by building a "ladder" of values. Additionally, to encourage participants to provide more detailed answers, a pyramiding strategy was employed. As a result, they were able to elaborate on the actions, ideas, and feelings associated with their YouTube viewing preferences.

Focus Group 2:

The second focus group comprised six participants. Participants ranged in age from 35 to 64, a spread that facilitated spontaneous interactions and presented the additional benefit of a balanced dynamic. This setup minimised the emergence of predefined group roles, such as the potential dominance of older members over younger participants, a phenomenon often observed in mixed-age groups (Sykes, 1990). The group comprised three women and three men, enabling insights across genders. Among the participants, three were retired, one was a practising lawyer, one held a position as a sales manager in a private company, and another worked in the healthcare sector. All participants had a college education, with two holding master's degrees. Unlike the first group, the second group consisted of participants from a broader range of demographic and occupational backgrounds. Thus, insights represented diverse socio-cultural perspectives. The discussion extended for 40 minutes. To ensure

consistency in data collection, all primary questions posed to Group 1 were also presented to this group.

Limitations

This qualitative study inevitably had some limitations and biases. First of all, according to Morgan (1998), there should be a minimum of three focus groups, but the number of focus groups performed is two. However, the control for age and sex differences, as well as the purposeful selection of participants, may help justify the limited efforts. Additionally, these group discussions will not be used as standalone methods but rather as supplementary tools to scale item generation.

Item generation

The focus group discussions revealed the following main themes via content analysis. To illustrate the first focus group, the following themes emerged from the talks:

In line with qualitative research methodologies, items were systematically developed based on initial findings to capture critical themes identified in participant responses. The researcher organised and then categorised these emergent themes with assistance from two independent judges. One of the independent judges was a PhD graduate, and the other was a PhD candidate. A data reduction process was applied to prepare the data for analysis. To carry out this, participant responses were summarised, non-essential content was removed, and the responses were organised into broader thematic categories. After the data reduction, the final set of items reflects statements regarding participants' motivations and behaviours for consuming YouTube content. It is intended for the evaluation of interrater reliability by independent judges.

From the two focus groups, participants' identified motivations for watching YouTube content are as follows:

I watch YouTube because:

- It is entertaining.
- It offers easy access to information.
- Its visual nature aligns with my preference for visual content.
- It provides a personalised experience.
- The creators I follow share my interests (e.g., car enthusiasts' language) and have valuable industry connections.
- I can find virtually anything I need on YouTube.
- It allows me to control when and what I watch.
- I can directly engage with video creators.
- It boosts my motivation for specific sports.
- It allows me to experience different places virtually.
- It helps me explore new topics and hobbies.
- I learn a great deal on YouTube, primarily related to my hobbies, work, or studies.
- The music content is varied and extensive.
- Music recommendations are beneficial.
- YouTube is a valuable educational resource.
- It keeps me updated on lifestyle trends and youth culture.
- The YouTube VR app lets me virtually explore various places.
- I stay informed about recent technology developments on YouTube.
- I enjoy discovering emerging talent on YouTube.
- I use YouTube content for work-related purposes.
- I watch videos about destinations I plan to visit for preparation.

The judges were presented with 21 items to categorise within five dimensions of user engagement, adapted from the work of Haridakis and Hanson (2009), using definitions provided to guide this

classification process. This approach facilitated the evaluation of interrater reliability for these thematic categories.

From previous research, five main categories of motivations for YouTube content consumption surface:

1. **Convenient Entertainment (CE)**: This category involves using YouTube as a quick and accessible source of entertainment, often for relaxation, habit formation, or simply passing time.

2. **Interpersonal Connection (IC)**: This category captures the use of YouTube to meet social needs, express oneself, and manage time online. It aligns with findings from previous studies, which show that YouTube often serves as a tool for building and sustaining social connections.

3. **Convenient Information Seeking (CIS)**: This category refers to YouTube's role as a cost-effective and convenient platform for accessing information and staying informed about current events. The platform's accessibility and affordability enhance its appeal for information retrieval.

4. **Social Interaction (SI)**: Social Interaction refers to using YouTube to connect with others, meet new people, and participate in conversations. This category highlights YouTube's role in fostering social exchange and community building among users. This category primarily encompasses the users' ability to engage with YouTube video creators.

5. **Telepresence (TP)**: Telepresence refers to the sensation of being immersed in experiences or settings that are otherwise out of reach. This category captures YouTube's ability to create a sense of "being there" in various environments.

The initials of each category, shown in parentheses, will serve as key references in our analysis. After categorising items independently, judges compared results and achieved a 95% agreement rate, with 20 of 21 items consistently categorised.

To address potential bias arising from high agreement in a limited number of categories, we also calculated the interrater reliability index using Perrault and Leigh's (1989) equation. The interrater reliability achieved during the coding process was 97%, indicating a highly satisfactory level of agreement among raters. Consequently, any items without consensus will be excluded by the researcher, while only the agreed-upon items will proceed to the scaling phase.

Questionnaire development

To ground our scale in the Uses and Gratifications framework, we utilised a well-established scale developed by Haridakis and Hanson (2009). We selected this scale because it offers accurate and consistent measures of user motives and behaviours, which aligns with earlier research. We carefully examined established scales to ensure our procedures were precise and closely related to the theories we were researching, thereby further guaranteeing the robustness of our strategy.

Haridakis and Hanson's (2009) study is one of the most influential and frequently cited works, particularly for its integration of traditional and new media scales using a two-step approach with qualitative methods. Recognising the importance of their findings, our study uses a similar framework.

The measurement instrument in this study is mainly based on the scale created by Haridakis and Hanson (2009), which provides a solid foundation for our approach. In Haridakis's (2009) work, YouTube-use motivation was measured using a 45-item Internet-motives scale adapted from previous research (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000). In response to the focus group discussions, six items reflecting arousal and social interaction motivation, adapted from Rubin's (1983) Television Viewing Motives Scale, were also included.

The survey revealed six main reasons people use YouTube. The first, *Convenient Entertainment*, includes watching for enjoyment, routine, or to pass the time (13 items). *Interpersonal Connection* captures motivations tied to feeling included, expressing oneself, or managing time (9 items). *Convenient Information Seeking* highlights YouTube's role as an accessible source for news and information (5 items). *Escape* reflects using YouTube to take a break from responsibilities or social interactions (3 items). *Co-viewing* involves watching videos with friends or family, and creating a shared experience (3 items). Finally, *Social Interaction* includes engaging in conversations and meeting new people through the platform (2 items). The survey further underscores that Interpersonal Connection and Co-viewing are particularly linked to content-sharing behaviours.

As Churchill (1979b) notes, the literature should specify how the variable has been previously defined and the number of dimensions or components it encompasses. We can understand the YouTube landscape and major studies researching the motives behind YouTube viewing and other forms of media consumption to gain insight into the general motives for media consumption. It has provided a

solid foundation for understanding the dimensions of the motives for watching YouTube videos.

The evidence from the literature search and the already discussed qualitative studies suggests that there are distinct aspects of YouTube-watching motives. This section describes the process used to establish the content for these dimensions and to validate the scale both psychometrically and theoretically. The process follows Churchill's (1979b) approach to developing measures of multiple-item marketing constructs, which can also apply to this topic.

One of the prime considerations in scale development is the adequacy with which a specified domain of content is sampled. The focus group approach used to generate items and the variety of motives discussed in these groups suggest that the scale has content validity (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001)

While previous UGT studies on social media and YouTube have contributed valuable insights, they do not fully account for newly emerging motivations that have surfaced due to shifts in user behaviour and technological advancements. For instance:

- Haridakis & Hanson's (2009) study identified motivations such as co-viewing, social interaction, and entertainment. However, our focus group discussions did not emphasise co-viewing as a major driver of use. Instead, participants highlighted the importance of individualised experiences, interactive engagement with creators, and algorithm-driven content discovery.

- "Telepresence" has emerged as a key motivation, influenced by immersive content experiences and the ability to feel present in virtual interactions. This aligns with Ruggiero's (2000) discussion on the evolving nature of gratifications as new technologies emerge.

- Perceived control over content selection was consistently cited in our focus groups as a motivation distinct from general entertainment or convenience factors, warranting its inclusion as a separate construct.

With the help of these empirical insights, we believe that refining or reducing Haridakis & Hanson's scale would better capture the new motivational landscape.

Operational definitions

Eighteen items have been generated. The statements are represented below. The table also includes their domains and sources. These items are presented in the order they appear within the questionnaire.

Table 1: The Statements from the Focus Groups, their Names, and the Dimensions that They are Attributed to with Source Research

Statement	Name	Dimension	Source
Because it's entertaining	CE1	Convenient Entertainment	Haridakis, P., & Hansen, G. (2009)
Because it is easier to get information	CIS1	Convenient Information Seeking	Haridakis, P., & Hansen, G. (2009)
Because it is very personal	IC1	Interpersonal Connection	Qualitative Study
Because it helps me immerse myself in places that I cannot physically experience	TP1	Telepresence	Ruggiero (2000)
Because it is enjoyable	CE2	Convenient Entertainment	Haridakis, P., & Hansen, G. (2009)
To search for information	CIS2	Convenient Information Seeking	Haridakis, P., & Hansen, G. (2009)
Because I can engage with the video creators	IC2	Interpersonal Connection	Qualitative Study
Because it creates the experience of being present in distant environments	TP2	Telepresence	Ruggiero (2000)
Because the music content has an extensive range	CE3	Convenient Entertainment	Qualitative Study
To keep up with current issues and events	CIS3	Convenient Information Seeking	Haridakis, P., & Hansen, G. (2009)
To belong to a group with the same interests as mine	IC3	Interpersonal Connection	Haridakis, P., & Hansen, G. (2009)
Because I feel like I can experience things without actually being there	TP3	Telepresence	Ruggiero (2000)
Because auto-suggestions are very useful	CE4	Convenient Entertainment	Qualitative Study
Because it provides a new and interesting way to do research	CIS4	Convenient Information Seeking	Haridakis, P., & Hansen, G. (2009)
Because I can control when I watch	IC4	Interpersonal Connection	Qualitative Study
To get information for free	CIS5	Convenient Information Seeking	Haridakis, P., & Hansen, G. (2009)
Because I can control what I watch	IC5	Interpersonal Connection	Qualitative Study
Because it makes me feel less lonely	IC6	Interpersonal Connection	Haridakis, P., & Hansen, G. (2009)
The number of previous views of a video affects my decision to watch it	VC	View Count	Authors
I prefer watching videos with a high number of view counts	VC	View Count	Authors

Source: Created by the authors

Questionnaires

The researchers used the items in Table 1 to develop the main questionnaire used in this study. The original questionnaire was developed in the English language. However, we translated it into Turkish and then enlisted the help of a PhD student to conduct a reverse translation back into English, ensuring the meaning remained consistent. The results were satisfactory, so we proceeded with the Turkish version in the field.

Table 2: Questionnaire Structure

Dimension	**Item Name**	**Number of Items**	Scale
Convenient Entertainment	CE 1,2,3,4	4	Interval
Convenient Information Seeking	CIS 1,2,3, 4,5	5	
Interpersonal Connection	IC 1,2,3,4,5,6	6	
Telepresence	TP 1,2,3	3	
View Count Effect	VCE 1,2	2	
Demographics	Gender	1	Nominal
	Age		Ratio

Source: Created by the authors

The items in the questionnaire are measured with an interval (Likert) scale, where 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree. The questionnaire also included certain demographic variables (age and gender). In addition, two questions were also included at the end of the questionnaire, probing the user's attitude towards the previous YouTube video view numbers to understand if they prefer videos with high view numbers. These questions are added to address the second research question.

Before the first questionnaire was distributed to the actual respondents, a pilot study was conducted with the researchers' colleagues, who are primarily experts in online business. Feedback was collected on the questionnaire's structure and language to ensure clarity and accuracy.

Sampling

The developed and ready questionnaire is to be distributed to the respondents as the pilot test for assessing reliability and validity.

The sample used in this study is a convenience sample obtained through the snowball technique. First, the questionnaire was announced by the researcher on three different social networking sites (LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram). The ages of the contacts in these mediums range from 15 to 65 years old. The gender distribution is, in judgment, the same. Some of these contacts also shared this questionnaire on their social media profiles, thereby achieving the snowball effect.

Finally, 105 questionnaires were collected within the determined time. All questions were mandatory, so subjects could not skip any. Therefore, all the collected answers are complete and acceptable.

Findings

Sample descriptives

The sample included participants aged 18 to 62, with an average age of 35.65 years. Female participants made up 46.6% of the sample. According to Bryant and Yarnold (1995), "one's sample should be at least five times the number of variables," with a subjects-to-variables ratio of at least five and a minimum of 100 observations for any analysis, regardless of this ratio. With five variables in this study, a sample size of 105 is sufficient to meet the adequacy criteria.

Scale descriptives

YTWM stands for YouTube Watching Motives, and YTWM1 and YTWM20 are the questions asked to respondents about their watching motivation. Most of the variables appear to have a normal distribution. The Mahalanobis distance was employed to identify multivariate outliers in the dataset. No outliers were detected because none of the values for Probability_MD is < .001.

Factor analysis

Rotation

Orthogonal rotation is used when factors are assumed to be uncorrelated, while oblique rotation assumes that factors may be correlated. Tabakhnick and Fidell (2007) suggest that the best way to choose between orthogonal and oblique rotation is to initially request an oblique rotation (e.g., direct oblimin or promax in SPSS) with the desired number of factors and examine the correlations among them. If the factor correlations are minimal, the solution will remain almost orthogonal. Specifically, they recommend checking the factor correlation matrix for values around .32 or higher, as correlations exceeding this threshold indicate a 10% or greater overlap in variance among factors—sufficient to justify oblique rotation unless there are strong reasons for choosing an orthogonal solution. In this study, an oblique rotation was deemed appropriate, as the factor correlation matrix contained values exceeding 0.32.

Factorability

To assess the suitability of the data for factor analysis, we conducted Bartlett's Test of Sphericity and examined the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy.

The result of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($p < .05$), indicating that the variables are suitable for structure identification, as they share common variance and the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix. The sample's suitability for factor analysis is further supported by the KMO measure, which was 0.779, above the suggested cutoff of 0.6.

To determine the number of factors to retain, we applied two essential criteria: the latent root criterion and the screen test. If we use the latent root criteria, we should continue our analysis with six factors which have eigenvalues above 1.0; however, the eigenvalues of the last two factors are just barely above 1. However, the scree test demonstrates that four factors would be appropriate for our factor analysis. Combining these two criteria led to the conclusion that we should retain four factors, which explain a total of 55.7% of the variance in our data.

We named the factors based on the underlying themes identified in the analysis: Factor 1 as "Escapism, Loneliness, and Telepresence," Factor 2 as "Convenient Information Seeking," Factor 3 as "Control Content and Social Interaction," and Factor 4 as "Convenient Entertainment." These labels reflect the primary motivations associated with each factor.

Table 3: Factors Loadings of Motivational Components for YouTube Viewing

Factor 1	
I watch YouTube because it creates the experience of being present in distant environments	8
I watch YouTube because I feel like I am able to experience things without actually being there	12
I watch YouTube because it helps me immerse myself in places that I cannot physically experience	4
I watch YouTube to belong to a group with the same interests as mine	11
I watch YouTube because it makes me feel less lonely	18
I watch YouTube because I can engage with the creator of the video	7
Factor 2	
I watch YouTube because I can engage with the creator of the video	7
I watch YouTube to search for information	6
I watch YouTube to get information for free	16
I watch YouTube because it is easier to get information	2
I watch YouTube because it provides a new and interesting way to do research	14
I watch YouTube to keep up with current issues and events	10
Factor 3	
I watch YouTube because I can engage with the creator of the video	7
I watch YouTube because I can control what to watch	17
I watch YouTube because I can control when to watch	15
Factor 4	
I watch YouTube because it is easier to get information	2
I watch YouTube because it is enjoyable	5
I watch YouTube because it's entertaining	1
I watch YouTube because it is very personal	3
I watch YouTube because auto-suggestions are very useful	13

Source: Created by the authors

The ranking of the factors based on their mean scores of the associated motivations are as follows:

Factor 4: Convenient Entertainment 3.65

Factor 2: Convenient Information Seeking 3.43

Factor 3: Content Control and Social Interaction 3.42

Factor 1: Escapism, Loneliness, and Telepresence 2.54

Table 4 presents the average scores for different motivations users have for watching YouTube, shedding light on which factors matter most to them. The higher the score, the more participants agreed, indicating that enjoyment, entertainment, and control over what they watch were the main drivers. These motivations are connected to the broader themes we discussed earlier, such as Convenient Entertainment, Convenient Information Seeking, and Interpersonal Connection. This overview helps us better understand what attracts users to YouTube, enabling further analysis within our framework.

Table 4: Motivations and the Mean Scores from the Survey Results

Motivation	Mean Score
I watch YouTube because it is enjoyable	4.23
I watch YouTube because it's entertaining	4.22
I watch YouTube because I can control when to watch	4.19
I watch YouTube because I can control what to watch	4.12
I watch YouTube because the music content has a very wide range	4.11
I watch YouTube to get information for free	4.08
I watch YouTube because it is easier to get information	4.08
I watch YouTube to search for information	4.06
I watch YouTube because it provides a new and interesting way to do research	3.46
I watch YouTube because it helps me immerse myself in places that I cannot physically experience	3.1
I watch YouTube because auto-suggestions are very useful	3.08
The number of previous views of a video affects my decision to watch it	2.94
I watch YouTube to keep up with current issues and events	2.93
I watch YouTube because it creates the experience of being present in distant environments	2.89
I watch YouTube because I feel like I am able to experience things without actually being there	2.85
I prefer watching YouTube videos with a high number of previous views	2.82
I watch YouTube because it is very personal	2.66
I watch YouTube to belong to a group with the same interests as mine	2.3
I watch YouTube because it makes me feel less lonely	2.15
I watch YouTube because I can engage with the creator of the video	1.95

Source: Created by the authors

Table 4 breaks down the primary motivations for people to use YouTube, with enjoyment (4.23) and entertainment (4.22) ranking as the top two. These high scores suggest that people are drawn to YouTube primarily for its recreational value. Control-related motivations also rank highly, as many participants appreciate being able to choose when they watch (4.19) and select specific content (4.12). The versatility of YouTube, which lets users customise their viewing experience to suit their tastes, gives them a sense of control.

Motivations for information seeking are equally significant. Many users find it easy to obtain (4.08) and value free access to information (4.08) when they utilise the platform to search for specific topics (4.06) or discover new areas of interest (3.46).

We have also calculated the mean score for each factor by averaging the mean scores of all items within each factor.

Table 5: Mean Scores for the YouTube Watching Motivations

Factor	Mean Score
CE	**3.93**
CIS	**3.722**
TP	**2.94**
IC	**2.90**

Gender-based motivations

Therefore**, Convenient Entertainment** emerges as the most influential factor, with the highest mean score. **Information-seeking** and **control over content** are closely ranked. **Escapism, loneliness, and telepresence** rank the second lowest, suggesting that emotional and immersive motivations are less significant compared to entertainment and informational needs.

We examined the commonalities values for each variable to ensure the factor solution accurately represented the variance in the data. Every item's commonality value was higher than the 20 threshold, suggesting that the factor structure successfully explained the variance in every variable. Because each variable's distinct contribution to the overall model is well accounted for, this finding validates that the preserved components accurately reflect the underlying motivations for YouTube usage. As a result, the component analysis solution captures important motivating factors with adequate explanatory power and is robust and dependable.

Lastly, for the second research question, the descriptives are as follows:

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I prefer watching YouTube videos with a high number of previous views (number of prior watches)	105	1	5	2.82	1.299
The number of previous views of a video affects my decision to watch it	105	1	5	2.94	1.440
Valid N (listwise)	105				

Source: Created by the authors

The descriptive statistics in Table 6 provide insight into participants' preferences regarding YouTube videos with high view counts and how these views influence their decision to watch. On average, participants rated their preference for watching videos with high numbers of views at 2.82 and the influence of previous opinions on their decision to watch at 2.94, which is close to the neutral midpoint of 3. This suggests that while the view count has some impact, it does not strongly motivate participants to choose specific videos.

Further supporting this, a strong positive correlation (Pearson correlation = 0.596, $p < 0.01$) was found between the preference for high-view videos and the influence of view count on viewing decisions. This correlation indicates a relationship between these two factors, as expected. However, the proximity of the mean scores to the neutral point suggests that the number of previous views on a YouTube video does not create a strong motivation for respondents to watch that content. Thus, while view count is considered, it is not a primary driving factor for video selection among the participants in this study.

Discussion

Our findings confirm that Convenience is the strongest motivation for using YouTube, followed by Convenience in Information Seeking. This aligns with previous research by Ilhan and Aydogdu (2019), who found that Turkish-speaking users primarily turned to YouTube for information access, with entertainment as a close second.

As the data in our study differ from those of Ilhan and Aydogdu (2019), and due to the use of convenience sampling, we believe this explains the difference in the ranking of the two motivations. However, in Ilhan and Aydogdu's (2019) study, the difference between the two motivations was not

very large; information-seeking behaviour was reported 6.4% more frequently than entertainment among 350 survey participants. In our study, we observe a difference of only 0.28 between the mean values of the two top motivations.

Age-based differences in motivations

From the perspective of age differences, our study included participants aged 18 to 62, with an average age of 35.65 years. Below, we compare our findings with two studies that focused on younger participants:

When compared to the motivations identified in Biçer et al.'s research, Social Interaction emerges as the primary motivation in their study, while information-seeking and Entertainment have lower mean values, ranking 4th and 5th, respectively, in terms of motivations for YouTube video consumption. In their research, Social Interaction is identified as the primary motivation, with Escapism as the second strongest motivation.

When we examine the population that participated in the survey, we find that all respondents are university students, with 81% of them being under the age of 26. Therefore, this sample differs significantly in terms of generation from our research. This offers a crucial insight into how YouTube-watching motivations differ across various generations in Turkey.

In the study by Köktener (2020), which examined Generation Z's motivations for YouTube usage, it was found that primary school students primarily used YouTube for the following reasons, in order of importance: publicity and self-actualisation, access to information and alternative information, entertainment, socialisation, social interaction, engaging in discussions, the appeal of access speed, generating information and self-expression through comments, YouTube's content indexing feature, forming reliable relationships, and accessing rich content.

Similarly, for secondary school students, the motivations ranked as follows: access to information and alternative information, publicity and self-actualisation, obtaining economic utility, socialisation and social interaction, educational purposes, self-expression through comments, encouraging purchasing, the appeal of access speed, and entertainment.

In contrast, our findings reveal a different order of importance for YouTube usage motivations: Convenient Entertainment, Convenient Information Seeking, Telepresence and Interpersonal Connection.

These differences also highlight the generational variations in YouTube usage. While Generation Z students emphasise self-actualisation, publicity, and alternative information, our findings suggest that Convenient Entertainment and information-seeking are the most dominant motivations in our sample. This contrast underscores the evolving nature of YouTube engagement across different age groups and contexts.

Our results further indicate that while entertainment and control-related factors are the strongest motivators overall, there is also substantial variation across demographic groups in our study. In our study, younger users (18-29) prioritise entertainment and music, whereas older users (50+) rely more on YouTube for information-seeking and control over their viewing preferences. This trend also aligns with findings from prior studies (e.g., Chen, 2021), which suggest that older users engage with digital platforms for practical purposes, while younger audiences gravitate toward entertainment-driven consumption.

Nevertheless, the significant role of these motivations supports the idea that YouTube functions as both a recreational platform and an informational resource for users.

Gender differences in YouTube usage motivations

The gender-based analysis further underscores the differences in motivation drivers. Female users report higher engagement in entertainment and music, whereas male users prioritise information-seeking. This aligns with research on media consumption preferences, which indicates that men often favour platforms that provide structured knowledge, while women tend to engage more with entertainment-based content (Pew Research, 2020). However, both groups show a strong preference for control over content, reinforcing the idea that YouTube's customisation features are a major appeal across demographics.

Interestingly, social and emotional motivations received the lowest ratings for both men and women. The lack of emphasis on reducing loneliness and fostering interpersonal connections suggests that YouTube is primarily a content consumption platform rather than a tool for social engagement. While

platforms like Instagram and TikTok focus on interactive experiences, YouTube appears to serve more of a one-directional media consumption role, where direct engagement with creators or communities is less prioritised.

When we compare these results with previous research findings in Turkey, as in the study by Biçer and Şener (2020), it was observed that there is no significant difference between the five subdimensions they identified and gender. They conclude that women and men compensate for the motivations in the subdimensions in a similar manner.

Conclusion

This study aimed to answer two main research questions:(1) What are the key motivations driving YouTube usage? Moreover, (2) To what extent does the number of previous views influence a user's decision to watch a YouTube video?

To address these questions, a comprehensive literature analysis was conducted, combining knowledge from research focused explicitly on YouTube with the more general theoretical framework of Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT). The literature on UGT (e.g., Katz et al., 1973; Rubin, 2009) emphasises that individuals actively seek media content to meet specific needs, such as entertainment, Information, social connection, and escape. Extending this theoretical lens to the digital age, prior studies (Haridakis & Hanson, 2009; Bondad-Brown et al., 2012) have highlighted YouTube as a unique platform offering not only entertainment but also information-seeking, interaction, and co-viewing experiences. Two focus groups were employed to develop qualitative research that built on these earlier findings. The goal of the focus group sessions was to determine the core motivations why consumers interact with YouTube videos.

Our study made a unique contribution by identifying four primary dimensions that underlie motivations for YouTube viewing. This approach enables an in-depth understanding of the diverse reasons why Turkish-speaking users engage with YouTube content.

1. **Escapism, Loneliness, and Telepresence:** This dimension highlights how YouTube can serve as a means of escapism, reducing loneliness, and offering users a virtual presence at events or places they cannot attend in person. While the motivations of escapism and loneliness have been previously discussed in studies on traditional media consumption (e.g., Rubin, 1983; Katz & Foulkes, 1962), the inclusion of telepresence as a sub-factor within this dimension represents a new contribution. This finding supports the rising use of digital media, particularly video platforms, in creating realistic and immersive experiences. Additionally, telepresence can be experienced more powerfully with YouTube's VR features for users who have compatible equipment. This motivation may become even more critical when these technologies become more widely available in the future.

2. **Convenient Information Seeking:** This dimension highlights YouTube's role as a tool for efficient information access, aiding users in research, informal learning, and keeping updated on current events. Similar patterns have been found in earlier studies, where YouTube serves as both a news source and an educational tool (e.g., Bondad-Brown et al., 2012; Haridakis & Hanson, 2009). YouTube's usefulness is increased by the fact that it provides free information, demonstrating that it may serve as a platform for self-directed learning in addition to being entertaining.

3. **Content Control and Social Interaction:** A novel dimension identified in this study, Content Control and Social Interaction emphasises users' agency over content selection and the importance of sharing and interacting with videos socially. This finding expands on existing UGT frameworks by incorporating the interactive features of digital platforms that allow users to curate their viewing experience and engage in asynchronous social interaction (e.g., through comments or video sharing). This component emphasises how crucial social connection and personalisation are in enhancing user engagement, two elements that were of lesser importance in traditional media situations.

4. **Convenient Entertainment:** Consistent with previous research (e.g., Bryant & Miron, 2004; Hanson & Haridakis, 2008), this dimension confirms that YouTube remains a significant source of entertainment. YouTube viewers appreciate the platform's ease of access to a wide variety of content, making it a great place to unwind and have fun. The high ratings for this dimension demonstrate YouTube's ability to cater to a diverse range of entertainment tastes, thereby increasing its appeal as a primary source of entertainment.

Social interaction and content control were identified as a unique dimension in this study, making a significant contribution to the existing body of literature. Due to its interactive features, which enable users to select, curate, and share content, YouTube distinguishes itself from traditional media in this

regard.

Additionally, the introduction of telepresence into the Escapism dimension provides valuable insights into how users interact with YouTube to replicate experiences that are unavailable in real life. The increasing amount of research on immersive and virtual media consumption supports this.

Our analysis of the second research question revealed an unexpected conclusion: consumers' decisions to watch a YouTube video are not significantly influenced by the number of views it has received. The idea that social proof—like view counts—has a significant influence on user behaviour is called into question by this finding. On the other hand, it aligns with Foster's (2020) conclusions regarding UK respondents. Instead, our results suggest that YouTube users prioritise personalised content and entertainment value over quantitative indicators, such as view counts, regardless of whether they are English-speaking or Turkish-speaking audiences. This is an essential hint for content creators aiming to create viral content: those who try to boost view counts may consider enhancing the entertainment and educational value of their videos.

Overall, this study makes a noteworthy contribution to our understanding of YouTube usage. By identifying four key motivational dimensions of YouTube users, we have enhanced our comprehension of this popular platform. According to our findings, individuals use YouTube as a platform for immersive and interactive experiences as well as a source of information, entertainment, and control. Furthermore, the recognition of Social engagement and Content Control as a separate dimension expands the theoretical knowledge of how digital platforms meet users' desires for engagement and agency.

Telepresence was identified in this study as a noteworthy and emerging component of escapism, one that is likely to become increasingly important as technology continues to advance. Our findings highlight a pressing need for further research to fully understand this phenomenon, as participants in this study also noted that telepresence is becoming more tangible and engaging due to technologies such as virtual reality devices. Similarly, innovations in recording techniques have significantly improved the quality of immersive content, further enriching these experiences and shaping how users interact with digital media.

Theoretical and practical implications

From a theoretical standpoint, these findings reinforce the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) by showing that YouTube satisfies both hedonic (entertainment) and utilitarian (information-seeking) needs. Additionally, the results highlight the relevance of Technology Acceptance Models (TAM), particularly in how users value control and ease of use when engaging with online platforms.

Practically, these insights are valuable for content creators, marketers, and platform designers. Creators targeting younger audiences should prioritise entertainment-driven content, whereas those catering to older users should emphasise informational and educational content. Moreover, YouTube's algorithmic recommendations should consider demographic preferences, tailoring content suggestions based on user's age, gender, and motivational patterns.

Limitations and future research directions

While this study offers valuable insights, it has several limitations. First, the survey responses are self-reported, which may introduce social desirability bias. Second, the study primarily focuses on Turkish-speaking users, limiting the generalizability of the findings to broader global audiences. Future research could explore cross-cultural variations in YouTube consumption motivations and examine how algorithmic recommendations influence long-term viewing habits.

Another promising avenue for future studies is investigating how emerging content formats (e.g., YouTube Shorts, AI-generated content) impact user motivations. Given the growing dominance of short-form video content, understanding how consumption patterns evolve could provide deeper insights into user engagement strategies.

The current research still has significant gaps in several areas where further research is needed to deepen the understanding of YouTube watching motives. Understanding YouTube viewing habits requires more in-depth studies that explore regional differences and consider how cultural and social factors influence user behaviour (Chiang, 2015). Additionally, longitudinal studies are essential for understanding how YouTube-watching motives evolve and how individual preferences change in response to changing life circumstances and technological advancements (Chiang, 2015). There is also a need for deeper research into the reasons people watch different types of YouTube content, such as music, gaming, and vlogs (Kim, 2023; Silaban et al., 2022; Foster, 2020). Additionally, future studies

could examine how YouTube's recommendation algorithm influences what people choose to watch and how it shapes their motivations (Sui, 2022).

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