

# Ways to Implement Effective Product Placement on YouTube

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## ABSTRACT

In line with marketers' growing use of product placement on YouTube, this study investigates elements of YouTube product placement that can ultimately affect viewers' purchase intention based on the theory of reasoned action framework. Structural equation modeling of data collected from 355 usable respondents demonstrates that three core elements of YouTube product placement affect attitudes toward brands which, in turn, affect purchase intention: relevance of a brand to a YouTuber's content, trustworthiness of the YouTuber, and favorability of the community on the YouTuber channel. The study also provides implications for marketers based on the findings.

## KEYWORDS

Brand Attitude, Communication, Marketing, Product Placement, Social Media, Theory of Reasoned Action, YouTube

## WAYS TO IMPLEMENT EFFECTIVE PRODUCT PLACEMENT ON YOUTUBE

Product placement is a marketing communication activity in which marketers place their products or services in media content without explicitly revealing their commercial purposes (Babin et al., 2021). Marketers have been increasingly using product placement for their marketing communication because they recognize the consumer fatigue caused by the excessive use of conventional advertising (García, 2021). Conventional advertising is intrusive as consumers are exposed to advertising messages they do not choose to view while enjoying media content. Product placement, however, allows consumers to continuously enjoy media content due to exposure or reference to products or services in a natural setting (García, 2021).

Product placement was initially used in movies in the 1930s; since then, the use of product placement has been expanded to diverse platforms from traditional media (e.g., television and radio) to new media such as video and online games, mobile applications, and social media (Eagle & Dahl, 2018; Kong & Hung, 2012). However, marketers targeting young consumer segments tend to avoid using traditional media because of the tendency of young consumers leaving traditional media for new media (Andrews & Shimp, 2018). On average, Americans aged 18-34 years watched television for only an hour and 12 minutes a day in the third quarter of 2020, which was roughly a 23.4% decrease from the previous year ("The State of Traditional TV: Updated with Q3 2020 Data," 2021).

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They spent about 2.5 times more on web and smartphone applications. This implies that marketers targeting young cohorts should use new media for their marketing communication activities to reach them effectively. The use of product placement in traditional media such as movies, television, and radio has been extended to new media such as online and mobile platforms (Liu et al., 2015).

Social media platforms are online platforms where users can interact with others either in real time or asynchronously (Rhee et al., 2021). Social media users build a network by sharing content generated by themselves or others (e.g., other users, institutions, marketers). Although social media sites are relatively new, around 82% of the total U.S. population used social media in 2021, up from 53% a decade ago (The Infinite Dial 2021, 2021). Social media is especially popular among young Americans. According to a social media survey conducted in 2019, 89% of the Generation Z and 88% of the Generation Y population used social media daily (Cox, 2019).

Among various social media platforms such as social networks (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn), forums (e.g., Reddit and Digg), and media sharing networks (e.g., Instagram and YouTube), YouTube recorded the most significant growth since 2019 (Auxier & Anderson, 2021). One notable phenomenon is that YouTube shows high usage rates in all online user age cohorts. 72% of the total online users and 67% of baby boomer online users used YouTube in the third quarter of 2020 (Dixon, 2022). Baby boomers spent close to an equal amount of time on social media as younger age cohorts (Sheldon et al., 2021). In the case of YouTube, practitioners should focus on online users of all ages rather than focusing on the younger age cohort. According to the latest YouTube Culture and Trends Report, changes in lifestyles caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have contributed to the growth of YouTube (Shalavi & Zeitoune, 2021). Due to the lockdown and restrictive COVID-19 guidelines, people lost opportunities to interact with others in person. This social disconnection dramatically damaged emotional and cognitive well-being (Provenzi & Tronick, 2020). Individuals tried to fill this void by watching videos with others in the virtual world (Shalavi & Zeitoune, 2021). Unlike traditional television where users passively receive content provided by television stations, YouTube users can actively choose the videos they want to watch (Duffett, 2020). They also interact with other users by uploading videos, sharing videos, commenting on videos or on others' comments, and using the real-time chat function.

Given YouTube's significant growth, numerous marketers have shifted their advertising expenditure from television ads to YouTube (Battaglio, 2016). Advertisers spent \$5.56 billion on YouTube in 2020, which was a 37.6% increase from the previous year (Schomer, 2020). YouTube ad revenues are expected to grow by \$6.87 billion by 2022. Among multiple YouTube marketing communication methods such as in-stream video ads and bumper (i.e., banner) ads, marketers consider product placement as one of the most effective ways to reach consumers and enhance brand equity by leveraging the relationships between YouTubers and their followers ("Influencer Marketing with YouTube Product Placement Videos," 2016).

Despite marketers' increased use of product placement on YouTube, research on product placement on YouTube is in its infancy. A few exploratory studies have identified the current status of product placement on the platform (Gerhards, 2019; Schwemmer & Ziewiecki, 2018) and general consumer attitudes toward YouTube marketing communication (Duffett, 2020). However, there have been few studies on how consumers react to specific elements of YouTube product placement. To fill the gap, this study aims to 1) identify elements of YouTube product placement that marketers can manipulate and 2) determine how those elements affect consumers' attitudes toward brands which can affect purchase intention.

This paper consists of six sections. The first is the previous introduction. The second is the literature review and includes a discussion of the significance of YouTube channels and YouTube creators. Then, attributes of YouTuber product placement are demonstrated, and the theoretical framework is discussed. The third section covers the methods used. Sampling and data collection methods are discussed, followed by the measurement demonstrations and statistical analyses. Results are found in the fourth section. The reliability and validity results are demonstrated, before addressing the results of hypotheses testing. Section five is for discussion and implications. And, finally, the sixth addresses limitations and future research.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### YouTube Channels

Personal and business channels are available on YouTube. A personal channel is given to anyone having a YouTube account. Business channels differ from personal channels in that the former can have more than one owner (Karch, 2021). As of 2022, there are more than 51 million YouTube channels, and these channels differ with respect to subscriber size (GMI Blogger, 2023). For instance, around 18 million channels have more than 100 subscribers. Among them, about 30,000 channels have more than 1 million subscribers. Channels are of various categories such as entertainment, sports, film, travel, music, gaming, autos, comedy, news, and education (Jeong et al., 2019).

### YouTube Creators and Channels

YouTube creators can be defined as people who generate and share content on their channels (“Monetization for Creators,” n.d.). As creators contribute to the YouTube platform by producing content and driving traffic, Google shares its advertising earnings with them (Geysler, 2022). Creators can earn more by increasing the number of viewers of their content and the time viewers spend watching advertisements. They have clear specialties and consistently upload videos relevant to these specialties on their channels.

YouTubers usually appear directly in their videos and try to garner loyal viewers by creating exciting videos and interacting with viewers by uploading personal videos, running live streams, using community posts, and responding to user comments. Due to their direct appearance and high interactivity, YouTubers acquire fan communities just as celebrities do. Thus, product placement on YouTube possesses the characteristics of not only general product placement (i.e., placing products in media content) (Williams et al., 2011) but also celebrity endorsement (i.e., using public recognition to promote products by appearing with them) (Jamil & Hassan, 2014).

### Attributes of YouTuber Product Placement

#### *Prominence*

Prominence implies the degree to which viewers can notice product placement in YouTube content. Product placement becomes noticeable when a product is used, mentioned, or presented by YouTubers, and highly prominent product placement can increase product recall (Davtyan & Tashchian, 2022). Jin and Muqaddam (2019) found improved credibility and attitude toward brands when consumers were exposed to explicit product placement in Instagram. Highly prominent product placement, however, can generate negative attitudes because it can impede viewers’ immersion in content (d’Astous & Seguin, 1999). Similarly, prominent brands in the ads reduced consumers’ intention to share them (Tellis et al., 2019). Due to this controversy, it is crucial to understand whether prominence can enhance brand attitudes. Thus, the following hypothesis is posited:

H1: The prominence of YouTube product placement positively affects brand attitudes.

#### *Relevance of Products to YouTube Content*

Several studies demonstrate that relevance of sponsored products to program contents can form positive attitudes toward the products because viewers feel naturally inclined toward the product placement (Chopra et al., 2020; Ghosh, 2022). According to Ghosh (2022), when the content of social media influencers was not relevant to those influencers, followers were not highly involved in the content. YouTube channels are highly segmented, and each channel has its own clear specialties (Jeong et al., 2019). Even though YouTube does not provide a channel catalog for its over 51 million channels, viewers can find channels that suit their interests. Since viewers actively engage in finding specific channels, they have a high level of involvement in video content (Liu et al., 2015). Thus, product

placement that is not relevant to the channel's content can distract viewers, which can negatively impact brand attitudes. Therefore, the following hypothesis is presented:

H2: Relevance of product placement to channel content positively affects brand attitudes.

### *YouTuber Favorability*

Unlike traditional media channels (e.g., television, radio, newspapers, and magazines) that provide one-way information delivery, YouTube offers features for YouTubers and viewers to engage in two-way interactions. For instance, viewers can indicate whether they like or dislike a specific video by clicking a like or dislike button. They can leave comments in the comments section of a particular video, and YouTubers or general viewers can reply to those comments. YouTubers can interact with viewers in real time via live streaming. Individuals generally desire to form affection through their interactions with others (Jakubiak et al., 2021). Due to the high levels of interactivity on YouTube, viewers develop a strong rapport with YouTubers, and this favorability can be transferred to sponsored products that appear with YouTubers (Lee & Lee, 2022). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: YouTuber favorability positively affects brand attitudes.

### *Community Favorability*

One of the main reasons people use social media platforms is to interact with other users sharing similar interests (Appel et al., 2020). Marketers try to build active communities where general users can freely interact with other people to meet this need (Santos et al., 2022). Marketers attempt to foster interaction among general users instead of merely delivering promotional messages via their social media pages. Consumers can discuss products, services, and promotional messages and create and post content on brands' social media pages (Christodoulides et al., 2013). Some studies demonstrate that community commitment and peer communication about a product can alter consumer attitudes and purchase intention (Kwon & Jung, 2013; Wang et al., 2019).

YouTube is one social media platform that provides features that foster peer communication such as a comments section on videos, community, and live chat. Viewers can evaluate the quality of peer communication and build a rapport with general viewers just as they build a rapport with YouTubers. The favorable audience of a YouTube channel can even form positive attitudes toward a brand whose product placement appears in the channel. Thus, the following hypothesis is formed:

H4: Community favorability positively affects brand attitudes.

### *Credibility of Influencers*

YouTube product placement has some of the characteristics of celebrity endorsement because YouTubers form a strong fan base regardless of their channels size (Gerhards, 2019). Unlike traditional media programs with plots and actors, YouTubers—who are owners of their channels—directly appear in video content, and subscribers actively and repetitively visit the same channel because they are fans of the YouTuber.

Endorser credibility is the degree to which an endorser's expertise makes people trust the information provided (Burnasheva & Suh, 2022). The credibility of an endorser is a widely-known antecedent of attitudes toward a brand (Eisend & Langner, 2010; Schouten et al., 2020). Consumers tend to positively evaluate brands endorsed by individuals they perceive as credible.

The credibility of the endorser comprises three major components: 1) expertise, 2) trustworthiness, and 3) attractiveness (Ohanian, 1990), and the effectiveness of these three components has been demonstrated by multiple studies in different contexts (Schouten et al., 2020). For example, Sudradjat and Wahid (2020) demonstrated positive attitudes toward beauty soap products generated by an endorser's

trustworthiness in an advertisement. Dhun and Dangi (2022) proved that the expertise of Instagram influencers can positively impact brand attitudes. The effect of an influencer's credibility on brand attitudes would be no exception in the context of YouTubers. Thus, the following hypotheses are posited:

H5: The expertise of a YouTuber positively affects brand attitudes.

H6: The trustworthiness of a YouTuber positively affects brand attitudes.

H7: The attractiveness of a YouTuber positively affects brand attitudes.

### **Theoretical Framework and the Effect of Brand Attitudes on Purchase Intention**

The theory of reasoned action (TRA) provides a framework explaining the relationships among attitude, behavioral intention, and actual behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). According to this theory, consumers form attitudes toward a product or service based on their evaluation of its attributes. These attitudes then affect their behavioral intention, leading to actual behavior. Since the theory is straightforward and effective in predicting consumer behavior, it has been adopted in various fields of consumer studies including the marketing communication field (Hagger, 2019; Kim et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2016; Van Reijmersdal et al., 2009). Based on the TRA, the following hypothesis is established:

H8: Brand attitudes positively affect consumer purchase intention of the brand.

The following attributes relevant to product placement that can be applied to the YouTube platform have been identified: presentation style (prominent vs. subtle), relevance of products to YouTube content (Liu et al., 2015), YouTuber favorability, community favorability, and credibility of influencers (Schouten et al., 2020). Using the TRA, the study identifies critical YouTube product placement attributes that can ultimately increase purchase intention (see Figure 1).

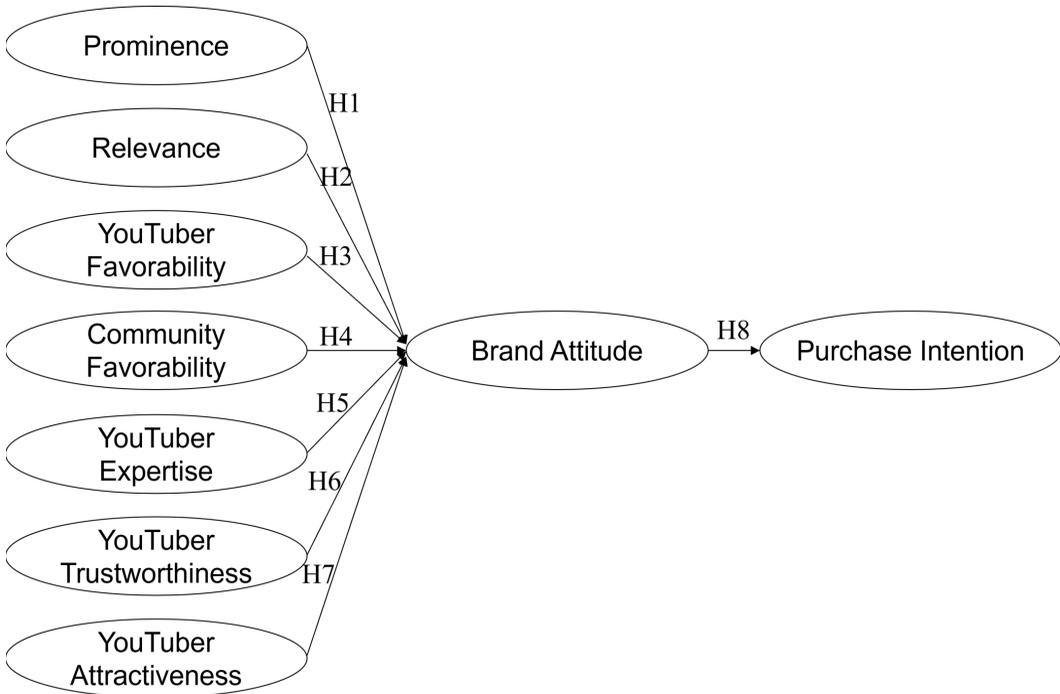
## **METHODS**

### **Sample and Data Collection**

The study employed Qualtrics to design the online survey. To screen out ineligible respondents who have not watched a YouTuber's video with paid promotion, the following screening question was asked: "Have you ever watched a YouTuber's video that includes paid promotion?" Secondly, since respondents had to answer questions based on what they watched in a specific YouTuber's video, containing a specific brand's paid promotion, the following additional screening questions were posed: "Do you remember the name of the YouTuber in the video that includes paid promotion?" and "Do you remember the name of the brand in the YouTuber's paid promotion video?" Next, the survey asked respondents to type the names of a YouTuber and a brand in that YouTuber's paid promotion video. The study used a piped text function available in Qualtrics to display the typed names of the YouTuber and brand in all the questions that followed, so that respondents could clearly answer questions based on what they watched in a specific YouTuber's video.

The online survey was distributed via Mechanical Turk. Mechanical Turk is the widely used data collection platform for studies relevant to online consumer behavior, and it can provide high-quality data with proper screening questions (Peer et al., 2014). After screening out ineligible respondents with screening questions, the study could collect responses from 355 respondents. Sixty-eight percent of the respondents were male and 32% were female. Sixty-seven percent of the respondents were married. The average age of the respondents was 33 years. The youngest and oldest respondents were 20 and 63 years old, respectively. The median income range of respondents was \$40,000 to \$59,999, and most of the respondents were college graduates (53.5%). The largest ethnic cohort was Caucasian (63.4%), followed by Asian (17.7%), Native American (11.8%), African American (3.7%), Hispanic (2.5%), and others (0.9%).

Figure 1.  
Research Model



## Measurement

Existing scales were adopted to measure all constructs as follows: prominence (Cárdaba et al., 2022), relevance (Fleck et al., 2012), YouTuber favorability (Rice et al., 2012), community favorability (Rice et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2019), YouTuber expertise, YouTuber trustworthiness, YouTuber attractiveness (Zheng et al., 2022), brand attitude (Fleck et al., 2012); and purchase intention (Wang et al., 2019). See Table 1.

## Statistical Analyses

The measurement and structural models were tested with Mplus Version 6.1 (Muthen & Muthen, 2010), and the study specified the maximum likelihood estimation that uses standard errors and a mean-adjusted chi-square test statistic to control non-normality issues (Satorra & Bentler, 2010). The fitness of the measurement and structural models was tested with three model fit indices: 1) the comparative fit index (CFI), 2) Tucker Lewis index (TLI), and 3) the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). This study accepted measurement and structural models when CFI and TLI were greater than 0.90 and RMSEA was less than 0.8 (Hair et al., 1998).

## RESULTS

### Reliability and Validity

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to test reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Model fit indices of the measurement model that include all constructs used for a structural model (i.e., prominence, relevance, YouTuber favorability, community favorability, YouTuber expertise, YouTuber trustworthiness, YouTuber attractiveness, brand attitude, and purchase intention) showed satisfactory scores: CFI = 0.919; TLI = 0.901; and RMSEA = 0.048 (see Table 2).

**Table 1. Scale Item: If the “Brand X” and “YouTuber” are Chosen**

Constructs	Scale Items
Prominence (Cárdaba et al., 2022)	Brand X was easily visible in the video I watched on the YouTuber channel. (Prom1) Brand X was easily perceivable in the video I watched on the YouTuber channel. (Prom2) Brand X was easily recognizable in the video I watched on the YouTuber channel. (Prom3) Brand X occupied an important portion of the video I watched on the YouTuber channel. (Prom4)
Relevance (Fleck et al., 2012)	Brand X was associated with YouTuber. (Rele1) Brand X and YouTuber went well together. (Rele2) Brand X was well matched with YouTuber. (Rele3) Brand X fitted well into YouTuber. (Rele4) Brand X was appropriate to be shown in the video I watched on the YouTuber channel. (Rele5)
YouTuber favorability (Rice et al., 2012)	I like YouTuber. (Yfav1) YouTuber is one of my favorite influencers. (Yfav2) YouTuber is a great influencer. (Yfav3) YouTuber is favorable. (Yfav4)
Community favorability (Rice et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2019)	I like the community on the YouTuber channel. (Cfav1) The community on the YouTuber channel is great. (Cfav2) The community on the YouTuber channel is favorable. (Cfav3) The community on the YouTuber channel gives me a good experience. (Cfav4)
YouTuber expertise (Zheng et al., 2022)	YouTuber know a lot about Brand X. (Exper1) YouTuber has a sufficient experience with Brand X. (Exper2) YouTuber is an expert on Brand X. (Exper3) YouTuber is knowledgeable about Brand X. (Exper4)
YouTuber trustworthiness (Zheng et al., 2022)	YouTuber is honest. (Trust1) YouTuber is earnest. (Trust2) I feel YouTuber is truthful. (Trust3) I feel YouTuber is trustworthy. (Trust4)
YouTuber attractiveness (Zheng et al., 2022)	YouTuber is stylish. (Attract1) YouTuber is good-looking. (Attract2) YouTuber is attractive. (Attract3)
Brand attitude (Fleck et al., 2012)	I like Brand X. (Atti1) I am favorable to Brand X. (Atti2) I am positive about Brand X. (Atti3) Brand X is good. (Atti4)
Purchase intention (Wang et al., 2019)	I would recommend Brand X to my friend. (Purch1) I would choose Brand X. (Purch2) I would buy the product or service of Brand X. (Purch3) I would consider purchasing the product or service of Brand X. (Purch4)

Reliability with factor loadings of all items and composite reliability scores of all factors were tested. All factor loading and composite reliability scores were greater than the threshold of 0.40 (Hair et al., 1998) and 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Convergent validity was tested with average variance extracted (AVE). Fornell and Larcker (1981) demonstrate that 0.40 is the acceptable threshold of AVE if all composite reliability scores exceed 0.60. As Table 2 demonstrates, AVE scores of all constructs were greater than 0.40. The study tested the correlations of all pairs of constructs to test discriminant validity. Correlation scores were distributed between 0.627 and 0.824, which did not exceed the threshold of 0.85 (Kenny, 2016). Thus, the discriminant validity was supported.

### Hypotheses Testing

The research model and hypotheses were tested using structural equation modeling (SEM), and the structural model had satisfactory model fit indices: CFI = 0.919, TLI = 0.902, and RMSEA = 0.048.

**Table 2.**  
**CFA results**

Construct	Scale Item	S.L. <sup>a</sup>	CR <sup>b</sup>	AVE <sup>c</sup>
Prominence	Prom1	0.600	0.750	0.431
	Prom2	0.685		
	Prom3	0.724		
	Prom4	0.608		
Relevance	Rele1	0.692	0.861	0.558
	Rele2	0.687		
	Rele3	0.731		
	Rele4	0.683		
	Rele5	0.712		
YouTuber favorability	Yfav1	0.669	0.783	0.474
	Yfav2	0.690		
	Yfav3	0.722		
	Yfav4	0.672		
Community favorability	Cfav1	0.664	0.789	0.483
	Cfav2	0.706		
	Cfav3	0.705		
	Cfav4	0.704		
YouTuber expertise	Exper1	0.683	0.786	0.478
	Exper2	0.711		
	Exper3	0.707		
	Exper4	0.664		
YouTuber trustworthiness	Trust1	0.656	0.803	0.505
	Trust2	0.697		
	Trust3	0.731		
	Trust4	0.754		
YouTuber attractiveness	Attract1	0.738	0.796	0.566
	Attract2	0.717		
	Attract3	0.799		
Brand attitude	Atti1	0.719	0.812	0.519
	Atti2	0.716		
	Atti3	0.743		
	Atti4	0.703		
Purchase intention	Purch1	0.710	0.803	0.505
	Purch2	0.717		
	Purch3	0.708		
	Purch4	0.707		

Note. <sup>a</sup>Standardized loading; <sup>b</sup>Composite reliability score; <sup>c</sup>Average variance extracted.

Among the seven attributes of YouTuber product placement (i.e., prominence, relevance, YouTuber favorability, community favorability, YouTuber expertise, YouTuber trustworthiness, and YouTuber attractiveness), relevance ( $\beta = 0.465, p = 0.042$ ), community favorability ( $\beta = 0.277, p = 0.045$ ), and YouTuber trustworthiness ( $\beta = 0.507, p = 0.002$ ) significantly impacted brand attitude, and brand attitude was a significant predictor of purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.905, p < 0.001$ ; see Figure 2 and Table 3).

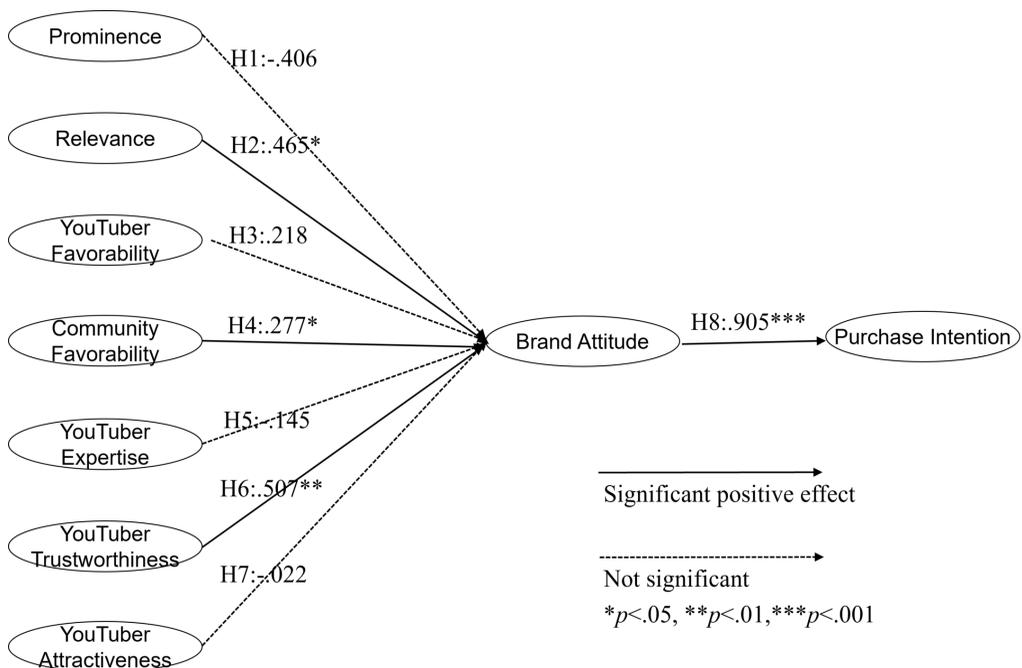
## DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

An increasingly larger number of marketers are trying to promote their brands through product placement on YouTube, consistent with the excessive popularity of the platform (Schomer, 2020). Marketers' most critical problem is selecting the right YouTube channel from among more than 51 million channels to maximize the return on investment of their product placement efforts (GMI Blogger, 2023).

This study attempts to enlighten marketers on the elements to consider when choosing the right channel for product placement on YouTube, which can ultimately help increase purchase intention of their brands. The study first identified elements related to YouTube product placement through a literature review and found the following seven relevant elements: 1) prominence, 2) relevance, 3) YouTuber favorability, 4) community favorability, 5) YouTuber expertise, 6) YouTuber trustworthiness, and 7) YouTuber attractiveness. Subsequently, the study ran SEM to identify elements that can positively affect consumer attitudes toward brands which affect purchase intention. Three core elements of YouTube product placement that positively influence brand attitude were determined: 1) relevance, 2) community favorability, and 3) YouTuber trustworthiness. Of these, YouTuber trustworthiness appeared to be the most effective at influencing brand attitude ( $\beta = 0.507, p = 0.002$ ), followed by relevance ( $\beta = 0.465, p = 0.042$ ) and community favorability ( $\beta = 0.277, p = 0.045$ ).

Trustworthiness is a part of credibility. Although there are three components of credibility (i.e., expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness) (Ohanian, 1990), a YouTuber's trustworthiness can

Figure 2.  
 Results



**Table 3.**  
**SEM Results**

Hypothesis and Structural Path	Estimate	P-value	Result
H1: Prominence → Brand attitude	-0.406	0.122	Not supported
H2: Relevance → Brand attitude	0.465	0.042	Supported
H3: YouTuber favorability → Brand attitude	0.218	0.387	Not supported
H4: Community favorability → Brand attitude	0.277	0.045	Supported
H5: YouTuber expertise → Brand attitude	-0.145	0.455	Not supported
H6: YouTuber trustworthiness → Brand attitude	0.507	0.002	Supported
H7: YouTuber attractiveness → Brand attitude	-0.022	0.892	Not supported
H8: Brand attitude → Purchase intention	0.905	<0.001	Supported
Fit Statistics	CFI	0.919	
	TLI	0.902	
	RMSEA	0.048	

only increase positive attitudes toward brands in product placement. This result can be explained by the substantial trustworthiness formed by strong emotional attachments between YouTubers and their viewers (Ladhari et al., 2020). YouTubers appear in their video content and interact with viewers asynchronously through the community or comments sections and synchronously via live streaming (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). The strong rapport built through active interaction builds trust in YouTubers, and this trust can form positive attitudes toward brands endorsed by them.

As for the ineffectiveness of expertise and attractiveness in increasing positive attitudes toward a brand, viewers consider YouTubers as entertainers rather than experts. YouTubers cannot be experts on all brands they use in their content for product placements, and fans of YouTubers may recognize this. Fans of YouTubers might not consider YouTubers' appearance to be important. Even though academicians consider expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness as aspects of source credibility, marketers should particularly consider the trustworthiness of YouTubers when selecting YouTube channels for product placement.

The high relevance of a brand (shown in the YouTuber's video) to the YouTuber can generate positive attitudes toward the brand. YouTubers aim to clarify their channel categories and specialties to increase searchability (Jeong et al., 2019); therefore, users can easily find channels to gain the information they require. Users have clear expectations of the video content of a certain YouTuber. If a product placement is not relevant to the content, the satisfaction of users with the YouTuber's video may be low because it does not meet viewers' initial level of expectation, as demonstrated by the expectation confirmation theory (Oliver, 1980). Unsatisfied viewers may, due to a sense of irrelevance, form negative attitudes toward a brand.

The favorable community of a YouTuber's channel can form positive attitudes toward a brand displayed in the YouTuber's video. YouTube is not a typical video streaming site where users merely watch videos. It is a social media platform where users can freely interact with others in real time via the comments section and the community function. The comments section below a video provides a great community experience for viewers.

Winer (2009) demonstrates that interaction with other users is a major reason people use social media such as YouTube. Since the comments section is available for all videos, viewers enjoy discussing a particular video with other viewers (Xiao et al., 2018). The atmosphere of the community differs for different channels, with some channels providing a great community experience to viewers. Viewers of YouTube channels with good communities can freely exchange opinions about video content, including a brand used for product placement. Thus, marketers planning to use YouTube for product placement should choose YouTube channels that can provide great community experiences to viewers. For instance, they can check whether the comments sections of videos are active and friendly.

It is also essential to consider some elements related to YouTube product placement that cannot explain brand attitude formation. The study's results demonstrate that the prominence of a brand in a YouTuber's video cannot explain attitudes toward brands. YouTubers should clearly disclose product placement to viewers in their videos because it is a requirement of YouTube's terms of service ("Add Paid Product Placements, Sponsorships and Endorsements," n.d.). Viewers can easily recognize product placement even if it is not explicitly done, as the message "includes paid promotion" appears on the screen at the video's start.

YouTuber favorability cannot affect attitudes toward brands. Viewers' emotional attachment to a YouTuber cannot lead to purchase intention. Considering the significant effects of YouTuber trustworthiness, it can be concluded that viewers' attitude formation toward brands used for product placement is not influenced by the emotional aspects of YouTubers but by their rational aspects. Chen et al. (2021) study supports this claim. The study found that even though para-social interaction (i.e., imaginary interaction through media) generated both cognitive and affective trust in YouTubers, only cognitive trust could affect purchase intention.

## **LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

Issues with the generalizability of this study's results remain. This study is conducted in a specific context, namely, product placement on YouTube. Thus, the results cannot be generalized to other social media platforms. Furthermore, the study's sample cannot adequately reflect the characteristics of the overall U.S. population (e.g., distributions of gender and ethnicity). This issue is caused by the screening questions posed to choose respondents who remember the names of YouTubers and specific brands in paid promotion videos.

Additionally, seven elements of YouTube product placement (i.e., prominence, relevance, YouTuber favorability, community favorability, YouTuber expertise, YouTuber trustworthiness, and YouTuber attractiveness) were identified through the literature review. However, additional elements may exist that can be applied to YouTube product placement. Future researchers can conduct exploratory studies involving in-depth literature reviews to establish a comprehensive taxonomy of the elements of YouTube product placement. The study can be replicated with additional elements of YouTube product placement to determine whether there are other elements not addressed in this study that can significantly affect viewers' attitudes toward brands used for product placement.

## **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The author of this publication declares there are no competing interests.

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