Click, Watch, Learn: Motivational Drivers of YouTube Usage among Economics Students

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Abstract
Over the last few years, online learning has witnessed a marked increase, partly due to technological advances and the rising demand for flexible learning. With a lot of online learning platforms emerging to help institutions manage their teaching and learning activities, such as Learning Management Systems (LMS), Student Information Systems (SIS), Massive Open Online Systems (MOOC), and others. While this type of e-learning platform emphasises private and personal use, YouTube emerged in 2005 as a public video-sharing platform. YouTube can be very resourceful to students, with its large collection of educational materials on various subjects. Its easy accessibility, visual presentation, and interactive elements help improve students' comprehension and engagement. Making it is one of the convenient tools to be used by educators that offer them a platform to post their teaching videos over the internet. This study was conducted to examine which factors trigger students to use YouTube the most in assisting their study, including perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, flexibility, social Influence, and content diversity. One hundred seventeen economists were involved in this study. The results indicate that perceived ease of use, along with social influence and content diversity, significantly motivate economics students at the institution to utilise YouTube for their academic needs over other factors tested.
Keyword: YouTube, Video-Based Learning, Motivation, Students' Perception, Teaching and Learning Process

Introduction
YouTube came into existence in 2005 to provide users with video-sharing functions that enable both video uploading and viewing between users. Participatory culture has incorporated YouTube as a major component, which allows users to create and consume

different kinds of content. YouTube offers multiple media choices between educational content and entertainment videos, together with information-based media, which lets users with various interests enjoy the platform (Shifman, 2011). The adoption of the e-learning medium reached unprecedented heights because of the COVID-19 pandemic (Musa et al., 2022; Yuan et al., 2020). As institutions began to emphasise the use of e-learning in their teaching and learning systems. Various new platforms exist, such as Learning Management Systems (LMS), Student Information Systems (SIS), Massive Open Online Systems (MOOC), and others. Although every university has its own e-learning equipment and platform, YouTube is still used as one of the mediums used by lecturers in the learning process. This is because YouTube offer its users to share a long-duration video for free (Fernández-Llatas et al., 2017). Teachers utilise YouTube as an additional learning tool because the platform delivers lengthy instructional videos that enhance student comprehension of complex academic material (Lee et al., 2017a). The instructional aspect serves its purpose most prominently in medical contexts through the creation of lengthy content which delivers detailed information about diseases or therapeutic methods for patient educational needs (Zhang et al., 2024).

With the capability to access the lesson via online video, it offers flexibility to the student as they can now watch their lecturer's instructional content for the likes of recorded lessons, specific topic workshops, and discussions anywhere and anytime through a laptop, handphone, or tablet. Students can watch their instructional course content through video any number of times needed to understand the subject matter (Sanjaya et al., 2022). Furthermore, lecturers who instruct the same curriculum can leverage YouTube as an extensive resource library for various subjects to collaborate with their peers for unique educational support. Educators face the problem of ensuring their video content is engaging to attract a broader audience, including the general public.

YouTube offers a commenting feature to facilitate interactions between viewers and creators, as well as among viewers, hence enhancing social learning (Lee et al., 2017b; Shoufan & Mohamed, 2022). With it, YouTube enables students to pose inquiries directly to their lecturers, who can provide direct responses, making the platform more suitable for educational needs. To ascertain the factors that significantly influence students' utilisation of YouTube for their educational requirements, numerous studies have been undertaken to study the dominant factors that trigger the students to continuously use YouTube in learning across various student demographics, including medical (Akakpo & Akakpo, 2024; Gayef & ÇAYLAN, 2021), mathematics (Gyeltshen & Dorji, 2023), accounting (Yaacob & Md Saad, 2020), language (Ly et al., 2024), and even computer science programming (Ebied et al., 2016; Emmanuel et al., 2022); nevertheless, there is a deficiency of research focused on economics students. Hence, this study is conducted to examine the elements that predominantly influence only economics students in utilising YouTube for their learning requirements. So, we can see whether economics students prefer YouTube as a learning tool and to assess whether the influencing factors commonly identified among students from other academic backgrounds also apply to those studying economics. Furthermore, some previously utilised factors are incorporated into the analysis.

The following sections of this paper are structured as follows: Section 1 provides an overview of YouTube and its application in the educational teaching and learning process. Section 2

clarifies the variables employed in the study. Section 3 delineates the study's methodology and data collection; Section 4 elucidates the findings and outcomes of the investigation, while Section 5 presents the study's conclusion.

Literature Review

Perceived Usefulness

A fundamental construct in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) Perceived usefulness (PU) explains how users access technology effectiveness to enhance their job productivity, influencing their acceptance decisions. The definition of PU describes how much a person believes that using particular systems or technologies can enhance their work productivity and efficiency (Holden & Karsh, 2010). Users adopt systems for work-related purposes based on their confidence in utilising those systems which reflect perceived usefulness. The more the user thinks the technology is useful for them, the more frequently they will use the system. According to (Abdul Tawab Khalil et al., 2012), this new technology can enhance user confidence in their professional worth. In this study, the "user" refers to students with an economic background, while the system pertains to the YouTube application. Meanwhile, (F. Davis & Warshaw, 2006) defines perceived usefulness as the perception of consumers' post-usage experience on a particular system.

Perceive Ease of Use

Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) serves as the second main factor from the TAM model utilized in this study. Both PU and PEOU are the core variables in the TAM model (F. D. Davis & others, 1989). PEOU functions as a core element of the TAM model to evaluate how users accept technological systems. PEOU is defined as the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free of effort (Mawaddah & Retnowardhani, 2023; Taplak & ŞENER, 2022). This construct is pivotal because it directly impacts users' attitudes towards technology and their intention to use it. The TAM posits that when users perceive a technology as easy to use, they are more likely to adopt it, as this perception reduces the emotional strain and cognitive load associated with learning and utilizing new systems (Mawaddah & Retnowardhani, 2023; Taplak & ŞENER, 2022).

Research indicates that PEOU not only influences users' attitudes but also enhances their perception of the technology's usefulness (Moon & Kim, 2001). This means that if users find a technology easy to use, they are more likely to believe that it will be beneficial to them, thereby increasing their intention to use it(Moon & Kim, 2001; Wicaksono & Maharani, 2020). Empirical findings demonstrate that PEOU generates substantial effects on user behavioural intentions in different situations like educational technology (Granić & Marangunić, 2019) together with e-financial solutions (Nurhayati et al., 2022).

However, while PEOU facilitates initial adoption, its influence may diminish over time as users become accustomed to the platform. As suggested by (Venkatesh & Bala, 2008), once users develop familiarity, PEOU may no longer be a primary determinant of continued usage, shifting the focus to content quality and learning outcomes. Additionally, despite its user-friendly nature, YouTube's extensive content library can lead to cognitive overload, requiring students to develop critical skills in filtering relevant and credible educational material. Although YouTube's recommendation algorithm improves content discoverability, it may also

expose students to non-educational distractions, reducing the platform's effectiveness as a dedicated learning tool (Smith, 2016; Vandeyar, 2020).

Flexibility

Flexibility (FLEX) is a key factor that enhances the appeal of YouTube as an educational tool, allowing students to access learning materials anytime, anywhere, and in diverse formats. Unlike traditional classroom settings, which operate within fixed schedules, YouTube enables students to engage in self-paced learning, accommodating their individual learning styles and external commitments (Zhou et al., 2020). The flexibility offered by YouTube can be categorized into three dimensions: temporal, spatial, and content flexibility. Temporal flexibility allows students to revisit educational content at their convenience, reinforcing understanding and retention. Spatial flexibility enables learning beyond institutional boundaries, particularly benefiting students in remote or underprivileged regions with limited access to formal education. Lastly, content flexibility allows students to select materials tailored to their preferred learning modalities, whether visual, auditory, or textual (Chanda et al., 2025; Harris et al., 2025).

Despite these advantages, flexibility also introduces challenges that may compromise the effectiveness of YouTube as a structured learning tool. The platform's abundance of content can lead to an overwhelming experience for students, who may struggle to identify reliable and high-quality resources. While flexibility grants students' autonomy over their learning, it also places greater responsibility on them to self-regulate and maintain discipline. Research by (Aleisa, 2022) and (Ayman et al., 2020) suggests that without a structured learning framework, students who rely solely on YouTube's for educational purposes may experience fragmented learning, lacking coherence in topic progression.

Social Influence

Several studies examined on how social influence affects students' willingness to use online learning platforms. The Research shows that social presence, peer influence, and instructor support play key roles in shaping students' learning intentions. According to the study conducted by (Guo et al., 2023), social presence strongly influences students' satisfaction and perception of the usefulness of online learning. When students feel connected to their classmates and instructors in a virtual learning environment, they are more likely to continue using the platform. However, the study also pointed out that social presence alone is not enough, but it must be combined with engaging and useful content to keep students interested over time.

Similarly, the study by (Hao et al., 2024) found that peer influence affects students' motivation to use online learning. When students see their classmates actively using an online platform, they are more likely to do the same. This suggests that building an interactive learning community can encourage more students to use the platform. The study by (Huang, 2021) studied how instructor support and feedback shape students' attitudes toward online learning. The study showed that when teachers actively engage with students, provide feedback, and encourage participation, students feel more motivated to continue using the platform. This supports the idea that students are more likely to keep using online learning systems, as it fosters interactive learning.

In terms of social influence, the study conducted by (Tahir, 2023) applied the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) model and found that social influence is a major factor in technology adoption. Their study showed that students who receive encouragement from friends, teachers, or parents are more likely to accept online education. However, they also found that personal attitudes and self-motivation play a role, meaning social influence itself may not be enough to ensure long-term usage

Content Diversity
One important reason students use online learning platforms is the variety of content. Content Diversity (CD) includes different types of learning materials, such as videos, readings, quizzes, and discussion forums. Researchers have studied how content diversity affects students' motivation, satisfaction, and willingness to continue learning online. For example, (Chen et al., 2024) studied MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) and found that having a diversity of learning materials can increase student engagement. However, too much content can overwhelm students, making it hard for them to learn everything. This may lead to more students dropping out. Their study suggests that online platforms should balance variety with simplicity to avoid information overload.

A study conducted by (Puriwat & Tripopsakul, 2021) focused on university students and found that well-structured, high-quality content is the most important factor for student satisfaction. If students find the content clear, organised, and useful, they are more likely to keep using the platform. This means content diversity is helpful only if it is well-designed and matches students' learning goals. It is supported by (Huacui et al., 2024) that found that both personal interest and external factors (such as content quality and platform support) influence students' decisions to continue learning online. Their study showed that students stay engaged when courses provide diverse, high-quality materials that meet their needs. However, content variety itself is not enough, but students also need personal motivation to continue learning.

In addition, (Wang & Nah, 2024) studied corporate e-learning and found that employees are more likely to engage in online training when the content is varied and job-related. Their study showed that offering different types of learning materials, such as videos, case studies, and hands-on tasks, makes employees see the training as more valuable and increases their willingness to keep using it. Meanwhile, a study by (Al-Adwan et al., 2021) created a model that combines different factors affecting online learning success. They found that content quality and variety strongly influence students' opinions on how useful an online learning system is. If students see the content as reliable, updated, and engaging, they are more likely to keep using the platform. Their research confirmed that content quality plays a dominant role in long-term e-learning adoption.

Usage Intention
Usage intention (UI) is a central construct in technology acceptance and behavioural research, describing an individual's deliberate plan or willingness to engage with a system or technology (Ajzen, 1991; F. D. Davis, 1989). In the context of digital learning, particularly through platforms like YouTube, UI reflects students' propensity to adopt such tools as part of their academic routines. The surge in online education that accelerated by the post-COVID-19 landscape that has further elevated UI as a vital indicator of students' engagement with and

alignment to technology-based learning (Mishra & Dholakia, 2023; Wang et al., 2021). According to the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989), UI is primarily driven by two cognitive beliefs: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Expanding on this, the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) incorporates social influence and facilitating conditions, highlighting how both personal evaluations and contextual factors shape individuals' behavioural intentions (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Within the educational domain, these frameworks explain why students are more likely to engage with YouTube when it is perceived as beneficial, user-friendly, and endorsed by peers or instructors.

In content-heavy and conceptually abstract disciplines like economics, the visual, interactive, and multimodal nature of YouTube helps bridge understanding gaps, promote retention, and enhance critical thinking. This pedagogical value reinforces students' willingness to use YouTube not just sporadically but consistently as a learning tool. Additionally, the diversity of content on YouTube where ranging from expert lectures to animated tutorials that has been shown to increase learner engagement and satisfaction. As noted by (Mohamad Saleh et al., 2024), content richness directly influences students' motivation and sustained usage, particularly in fields requiring multimedia-based instruction. This highlights the evolving need for learning ecosystems that go beyond traditional learning management systems (LMS) to embrace platforms preferred and co-created by students themselves.

In this study, usage intention is conceptualised as the learner's purposeful and motivated commitment to using YouTube as a supplemental tool for economics learning. The proposed model identifies five key motivational factors influencing UI: Perceived Usefulness, Perceived Ease of Use, Flexibility, Social Influence, and Content Diversity. Anchored in established theories and supported by recent empirical evidence, this framework seeks to uncover what drives students' digital learning behaviours in an era where on-demand platforms redefine educational access and engagement. Understanding these determinants is essential for educators and policymakers aiming to optimise student learning through digital innovation.

Methodology
The investigators utilised descriptive research and distributed questionnaires to collect data. The researchers personally administered the questionnaire. The survey participants evaluated potential factors affecting their preference for using YouTube in their educational settings through a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree. Some of the questionnaires were adopted and adapted from various studies, and the complete set of questions is compiled in Table 1. The study's scope is concentrated on students having a background in economic education. For this reason, the questionnaire will be distributed online exclusively to diploma and degree students of the Faculty of Economics at Xiamen University Malaysia. The questionnaire instrument included demographic student profiles together with factors addressing perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, flexibility, social influence, content diversity, and usage intention. The questionnaire was drafted in English for easier understanding, considering that the education level of most respondents was up to the tertiary level. This approach provides researchers with simple methods to collect data which require less expense, time, and energy. Raw data collection through this method supports both respondent rapport building and motivation, together with cost-effective doubt clarification for multiple respondents. For choosing prospective respondents, the researchers used a simple random sampling technique. The necessary data

collection took place through questionnaire-based cross-sectional surveys. A total of 117 respondents, comprising diploma and degree students, were involved in this study. The researchers maintained direct observation throughout the questionnaire distribution to achieve a strong response rate. The data gained from the survey were analysed using the Social Science Statistics Package version 25 (SPSS). The analysis in this study included both descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation tests to study variable interactions. Figure 1 below delineates the comprehensive configuration of independent and dependent variables within the theoretical framework.
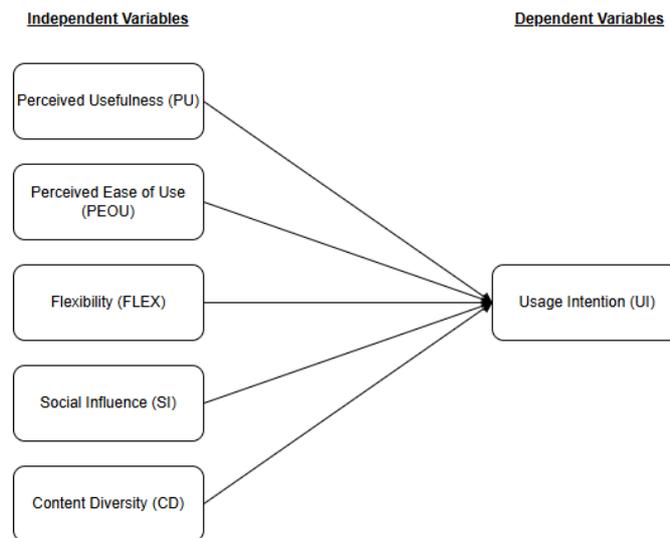

Figure 1: Proposed theoretical framework

Figure 1 above delineates the comprehensive configuration of independent and dependent variables within the theoretical framework.

Table 1

Questions utilised in the study

Motivation Factor	Observe variable	Scale	Reference resources
Perceived Usefulness (PU)	PU1: YouTube can improve my academic performance	Likert 1–5	(Ly et al., 2024)
	PU2: YouTube helps me learn new ideas	Likert 1–5	
	PU3: I can obtain answers to my enquiries on YouTube related to my study	Likert 1–5	
	PU4: Viewing YouTube videos enhances the theoretical and practical comprehension of my studies.	Likert 1–5	
Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU)	PEOU1: My interaction with YouTube is clear and understandable	Likert 1–5	(Ly et al., 2024; Yaacob & Md Saad, 2020)
	PEOU2: I find YouTube easy to use	Likert 1–5	
	PEOU3: I find out that YouTube is user-friendly to be use	Likert 1–5	
	PEOU4: It is simple to manipulate YouTube to fulfil what I want to support my studies	Likert 1–5	
Flexibility (FLEX)	FLEX1: I can learn through YouTube channels at any time	Likert 1–5	(Nguyen & Le, 2023)
	FLEX2: I can learn through YouTube channels anywhere	Likert 1–5	
	FLEX3: It's convenient to learn from YouTube channels because I can watch them on the go	Likert 1–5	
	FLEX4: When I need to, I can study from YouTube channels without being constrained by my regular schedule	Likert 1–5	
Social Influence (SI)	SI1: My course-mates recommend that I watch YouTube videos to learn	Likert 1–5	(Nguyen & Le, 2023; Yaacob & Md Saad, 2020)
	SI2: I'm encouraged by my course-mates to follow my lecturer's YouTube account	Likert 1–5	
	SI3: Everyone in class frequently uses YouTube to learn	Likert 1–5	
	SI4: My course-mates notify me frequently of new video tutorials uploaded by my lecturer	Likert 1–5	
Content Diversity (CD)	CD1: YouTube offers a wide variety of content that meets my learning needs for different economics courses	Likert 1–5	
	CD2: YouTube provides both in-depth and broad overviews of topics, making it suitable for various stages of learning	Likert 1–5	
	CD3: The availability of content in multiple languages or with subtitles on YouTube improves my learning experience	Likert 1–5	
	CD4: The variety of content on YouTube allows me to find materials that align with my personal learning style (e.g., visual, auditory, kinesthetic)	Likert 1–5	

Usage Intention (UI)	UI1: I will continue to use YouTube as a supplementary learning tool	Likert 1–5	(Nguyen & Le, 2023; Yaacob & Md Saad, 2020)
	UI2: I will utilise YouTube consistently for educational purposes	Likert 1–5	
	UI3: I will consider videos on YouTube as my primary source of learning material	Likert 1–5	
	UI4: I recommend that others use YouTube for educational purposes	Likert 1–5	

Findings

Demographic Analysis

Table 2

Demographic profile (n=211)

Demographic	Value	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	124	58.8
	Male	87	41.2
Education	Diploma	18	8.5
	Degree	191	90.5
	Master	1	0.5
	PHD	1	0.5
Study Mode	Full time	198	93.8
	Part time	13	6.2

Within the studied sample, females represented 58.8% of the participants (124 students), while males comprised 41.2% (87 students). Most respondents were degree students (90.5%, 191), followed by a diploma (8.5%, 18), and only 0.5% each coming from master's and PhD students. Most students in this group attend classes full-time (93.8%, 198), while the rest continue their studies part-time (6.2%, 13). Most participants demonstrated adequate skills with YouTube, according to the survey results. The respondents evaluated the application with a "normal" ranking at (36.0%, 76), followed by "excellent" at (29.4%, 62) and then "very excellent" at (22.3%, 47). The responses for low ratings were "Extremely Poor" at (4.7%, 10) and "Poor" at (7.6%, 16).

The study respondents showed good usage skills since they use YouTube often. Results reveal that the majority of students (129 students or 61.1%) use the internet 1 to 3 times weekly, indicating their moderate usage patterns. The findings demonstrate that students access the internet 4–6 times weekly as a high but regulated consumer pattern given the 21.3% (45 students) percentage. A total of 9 students represented 4.3% of the group who utilized the internet 7–9 times per week, thus indicating minimal heavy usage. 13.3% of the group, comprised of 28 students, utilise the internet an excess more than ten times weekly while maintaining a consistent internet presence. Students use YouTube mainly to receive concept clarification tutorials, which act as interactive theoretical explanations, according to 59.2% of 125 respondents. Additionally, 50.2% of 106 students rely on YouTube to understand current events and their real-world applications, and 48.34% of 102 students get practical tutorial help using this platform. The student also uses YouTube to search for inspiration for research topics (35.0%, 74) and listen to expert interview insights (23.7%, 50).

Reliability Analysis

Table 3

Reliability analysis

Variables	Number of items	Cronbach Alpha
Perceived Usefulness (PU)	4	0.941
Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU)	4	0.946
Flexibility (FLEX)	4	0.940
Social Influence (SI)	4	0.884
Content Diversity (CD)	4	0.942
Usage Intention (UI)	4	0.917

Table 3 determines the results of all the variables tested in the study. It shows a significant variation of Cronbach's Alpha values, fluctuating from 0.884 to 0.946. A Cronbach's alpha value must be greater than 0.70 to be accepted (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The study demonstrates that Cronbach's alpha values for perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, flexibility, social influence, content diversity, and usage intention meet the criteria of validity and acceptability.

Correlation Analysis

The result of Pearson's correlations between all variables is illustrated in Table 4 below. All tested variables were positively and significantly correlated with each other (p <.01). This shows that all variables have a strong association with each other.

Table 4

Correlation analysis

Variable		PU	PEOU	FLEX	SI	CD	UI
PU	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	1	.836**	.842**	.604**	.863**	.787**
PEOU	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.836**	1	.867**	.597**	.844**	.818**
FLEX	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.842**	.867**	1	.595**	.866**	.7.44**
SI	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.604**	.597**	.595**	1	.657**	.693**
CD	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.863**	.844**	.866**	.657**	1	.824**
UI	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.787**	.818**	.799**	.693**	.824**	1

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

Perceived usefulness and usage intention exhibit a strong correlation (r=0.787), indicating that higher perceived usefulness is linked to increased intention to use the system. Students' ease of using the YouTube platform directly affects their intention to use it, as shown by the strong correlation (r=0.805). The data shows that two pairs of variables reach their highest

correlations: first between perceived ease of use and flexibility (r=0.867) and second between flexibility and content diversity (r=0.866). This indicates that system flexibility has strong connections to both ease of use and system design approach.

The correlations between social Influence and other variables remain significant yet hold the lowest value among all measures in the study. The correlation between social influence and usage intention (r=0.693) suggests that social factors, such as peer recommendations, moderately influence students' intention to use the system. However, social influence has a comparatively weaker association with perceived usefulness (r=0.604) and perceived ease of use (r=0.597), implying that while social influence matters, it is not the strongest determinant that triggers students to use YouTube.

Multiple Regression Analysis
Table 5
Regression analysis

Coefficients					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
	.087	.140		.617	.538
PU	.095	.077	.092	1.232	.219
PEOU	.278	.070	.299	3.969	<.001
FLEX	.116	.078	.120	1.494	.137
SI	.244	.047	.233	5.194	<.001
CD	.243	.085	.235	.2.859	.005

Among the independent variables, perceived ease of use (β=0.278, p<0.001), social influence (β=0.244, p<0.001), and content diversity (β=0.243, p=0.005) have the strongest effects on the usage intention, suggesting that ease of use, social influence, and system design significantly drive students' intention to use the system.

The analysis shows that perceived usefulness and flexibility do not link to usage intention (β=0.095, p=0.219) and ((β=0.116, p=0.137). Therefore, perceived usefulness and flexibility fails to affect usage intention in this model directly. According to this research result, students seem to value system usability and peer influence alongside system design factors above the perceived benefits.

Conclusion and Discussion

Three main variables identified through this research demonstrate how perceived ease of use, together with social influence and content diversity, trigger economic students in the institution to use YouTube for their study needs. For perceived ease of use and social influence, the same result is similar to other student perceptions on the YouTube study conducted by (Nguyen & Le, 2023; Yaacob & Md Saad, 2020). The study from (Y. Chen, 2013) supports the finding that YouTube motivates people through its ability to engage learners independently through its vast, accessible content. Students embraced YouTube as a learning tool because they found its interactive style entertaining. Interestingly, Perceived Usefulness is not a significant predictor, suggesting that students under the scope of study may not prioritise usefulness as a direct factor in their decision to use YouTube.

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