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*Araştırma Makalesi*

## **EVALUATION OF PERSONAL BRAND MIX 7C IN TERMS OF YOUTUBERS**

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### **Abstract**

*Personal branding is about people positioning themselves in the market they are in. Today, especially after the rapid developments in the digital world, personal branding has started to manage its relations with its target audiences through social media channels. With the differentiation of the personal brand, especially with the development of social media, 7P which is known as the marketing mix and has started to turn into 7C (Character, Credibility, Channels, Content, Contacts, Consistency) over time.*

*The purpose of this research is to investigate the perceptions of follower groups of Youtubers, one of the most visible faces of personal branding, based on 7C. The interviews have been conducted by applying a qualitative research methodology. The research questions were formed to cover 7Cs. At the end of the interviews, the data collected from the participants were analyzed by using content analysis. Since the studies based on 7C are not many in the marketing literature, it is thought that the study will create a unique contribution value in this sense. It also differs in that it deals with the subject of YouTubers, who are on the agenda of the last period and each of them has turned into a personal brand with its own channel. As a result of the study, it was revealed that the content and the credibility are gained the most by the participants from the 7Cs. This study focuses on social media phenomena within the scope of 7C. This can be generalized in other studies.*

**Keywords:** *Personal Branding, Youtube, YouTuber, Social Media, Social Media Channels*

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## YOUTUBER'LARIN KİŞİSEL MARKALAMANIN 7C'Sİ AÇISINDAN DEĞERLENDİRİLMESİ

### Öz

*Kişisel markalaşma, insanların içinde buldukları pazarda kendilerini konumlandırımlarıyla ilgilidir. Günümüzde özellikle dijital dünyadaki bu hızlı gelişmelerin ardından kişisel markalaşma, hedef kitleleri ile olan ilişkilerini sosyal medya kanalları üzerinden yönetmeye başlamışlardır. Kişisel markalaşmanın farklılaşması, özellikle sosyal medyanın gelişmesiyle birlikte pazarlama karması olan 7P, zamanla 7C'ye dönüşmeye başlamıştır (Karakter, Güvenilirlik, Kanallar, İçerik, İletişim Kurmak, Tutarlılık).*

*Bu araştırmanın amacı, kişisel markalaşmanın en görünür yüzlerinden biri olan Youtuber'lar hakkında takipçilerin algılarını 7C'den yola çıkarak incelemektir. Nitel araştırma yönteminin bir türü olan görüşme yöntemi ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmada 7 C'yi kapsayacak şekilde araştırma soruları oluşturulmuştur. 7C'yi baz alarak yapılan çalışmalar pazarlama literatüründe fazla olmadığı için bu anlamda çalışmanın özgün katkı değeri yaratacağı düşünülmektedir. Konuyu son dönemin gündeminde olan ve her biri kendi kanalı ile kişisel markaya dönüşen YouTuber'larla ele alması bakımından da farklılaşmaktadır. Çalışma sonucunda katılımcıların 7C içinde en çok içerik ve inandırıcılığa önem verdiği ortaya çıkmıştır. Gelecekteki çalışmalar spesifik bir sektöre odaklanabilir. Bu çalışmada 7C kapsamında sosyal medya fenomenlerine odaklanılmıştır. Başka çalışmalarda bu daha genelleştirilebilir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Kişisel Markalaşma, YouTube, YouTuber, Sosyal Medya, Sosyal Medya Kanalları*

### INTRODUCTION

Personal branding represents who we are and what we promise to our audience/consumers. Personal branding has become a common phenomenon and is used in various aspects for entertainers, athletes, authors, general managers, business owners, and politicians, and has spread to many other people in different positions in the company (Baltezarevic & Milovanovic, 2014, p. 6).

A personal brand has become more important in the digital age. Once it was considered only for celebrities and leaders in business and politics. But with changing world, online tools have allowed personal branding to become an important marketing tool for everyday people (Shepherd, 2005; Kaytaz Yiğit, 2021, p. 908). The age of the Internet allowed everyone to present themselves to the world with the image they want. New applications enable people to manage their personal branding, fine-tune their profiles, and share their ideas through blogs, micro-posts, and online discussions (Labrecque et. al. 2010, p. 38).

In recent years, especially with the increasing interest in Youtube, the number of people who produce content for this social media channel has increased considerably. Some of the YouTubers with an increasing number of followers have also turned into personal brands. Video-sharing websites provide low-cost broadcasting tools which are easy to use for their users and allow them to share their

content on personal profiles and interact with other users (Rigby, 2008; Yüksel 2016, p. 35). YouTubers; “Upload the video content to the personal YouTube channel they have opened regularly; directing the information and advice they offer around the topics of particular interest; defined them as individuals who directly address the public and their sub-communities by developing content (Thomson 2017 p. 811; Deveci, 2019, p. 82). It is also seen that some of the YouTubers, who produce content, especially in the fields of beauty and cosmetics, started to become a brand with their personal branding and started to produce physical products.

Personal branding is a topic that has been studied in the marketing literature. In recent years, the subject has gained distinctive importance in social media (Petruca, 2016; Chen, 2013; Nanayakkara and Dissanayake, 2020; Labrecque, Markos and Milne, 2011; Sharifzadeh, Brison and Bennett, 2021; Wetsch, 2012; Lois and Candraningrum, 2021; Faliagka, Ramantas, Rigou and Sirmakessis, 2018; Udenze, 2019; Niemien, 2016; Vilander, 2017). Most of the studies are on how social media can be beneficial for a personal brand and an effective roadmap can be followed with developing technologies. There are also studies that examine as a personal branding Youtubers and influencers (Chen, 2013; Tarnaovskaya, 2017; Kuitunen, 2019; Grzesiak, 2018; Arindita, 2019; Silaban, Dida and Perbawasari, 2019; Ishihara and Oktavianti, 2021; Vasconcelos and Rua, 2021 ). The 7C has been included in the literature, but one of the 7C's, content, has examined more than other variables in terms of personal branding. In the studies, the effects of content on originality and differentiation in personal branding were investigated (Urbanova and Slind, 2016; Karenina and Luthfia, 2019; Amalia and Satvikadewi, 2020).

Based on the importance of personal branding in marketing, the purpose of this research is to investigate the perceptions of followers about Youtubers as a personal brand within the scope of 7 C (Character, Credibility, Channels, Content, Contacts, Consistency, Confirmation). This study examines 7C with all its variables and combines it with personal branding. It differs from other studies as it explores 7C in all its dimensions. After the theoretical framework about personal branding is given, there are qualitative research findings carried out by interview method.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Personal Brand**

AMA defined the brand as name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group sellers and to differentiate them from those of other sellers (American Marketing Association, 2018). Al Ries and Laura Ries, mentioned the personal brand in 2003 evaluating the brand concept from a broader perspective. According to Ries and Ries, any proper name is a brand. They said that if we want to be successful in life, we must define ourselves as a brand (Ries&Ries, 2013, p.13; Gürel et. al, 2020, p. 698).

Tom Peters, said that every personality is potentially a brand and people should understand the importance of branding regardless of their age, position, and career (1997). Personal brand, self-positioning, or individual branding were first introduced in 1937 in the book “ Think and Grow Rich” by Napoleon Hill. Hill states, “It should be encouraging to know that practically all the great fortunes began in the form of compensation for personal services, or from the sale on ideas” (Hill, 2007). The first to introduce the concept of “personal branding” is Tom Peters (1997), who wrote the article “The Brand Called You”. He acknowledged that you can choose an identity that is created by the person’s skills, personality traits, and other features that will make him different from others (Benjamin, Guillaume& Sasaki, 2017, p. 11).

Runebjork (2004; Baltezarevic; 2014) argues that the phenomenon of personal brand can help people to identify their goals related to work, such as leaders or as entrepreneurs. Runebjork (2004) described a personal brand name together with the values that are associated with the name, essentially, the way an individual can be perceived by the environment (Baltezarevic, 2014).

Montoya defined the personal brand as “how to define your personality, your profession, your hallmark, and your goal” sum of these (Montoya,2005; Yiğit, 2021). Who becomes a leader in an environment is largely determined by her personal brand. In general, all people have a personal brand, but the process of developing a personal brand depends on what goals a person has and what it is that he wants to achieve (Baltezarevic & Milovanovic; 2019).

To give an example of a personal brand from the past, Marilyn Monore, whose real name is Norma Jeane, is one of the best examples. Throughout her life, she has carried her name as a personal brand to the present day, as a source of inspiration to many women, by giving different impetus to the cinema industry and by creating a different and unique image in everyone's minds. Another successful personal brand name is Oprah Winfrey. Oprah is consistently visible and has maintained an incredibly strong brand over a very long career. As in these examples, names that have been able to successfully implement personal brands can both influence their audience and be pioneers who can influence and change their age.

### **7P Becomes 7C**

The concept of 4P, which emerged in 1960 by Edmund Jerome McCarthy in his book “Basic Marketing”, is one of the fundamentals of marketing. McCarthy defined the 4Ps conceptual framework for marketing; product, price, promotion, and place. With the increasing importance of the non-manufacturing sector in the 20th century, the concept of 4P evolved to 7P. One of the first studies on this subject was conducted by Eiglier. P. and E. Langeard (1976). P. Eiglier and E. Langeard (1976) models reflect the differences between the functional tasks of marketing in the manufacturing and non-manufacturing sectors, highlighting the simultaneity of production and consumption of services, intangibility of services, and the special

role of the contact zone between the producer and consumer of these services (Pogorelova et Al, 2016, p. 6746).

Over time, it was understood that the 4Ps were insufficient, and the marketing mix was expanded to 7Ps. 7P; product, price, promotion, place, people, physical environment, process management. In terms of personal branding, 7P has turned into 7C. The article “The 7C’s: Towards A Better Anest Of Personal Brand” by Dominyka Venciute (2919) deals with how 7P evolved into 7C.

In this context, 7C can be explained as follows. 7C helps people reach their target most accurately and find their position. It helps the people to convey their characters and content to their target in the most accurate way, through the most effective channels, consistently and credibility.

### **The Product Becomes Character**

A product is anything that can be offered to a market for interest, acquisition, use, or consumption that can satisfy a want or need. It includes physical objects, services, persons, places, organizations, and ideas (Kotler& Armstrong, 2010). Services and products offered must present value to the customer (Sahu et.al., 2008, p. 213). Dominyka Venciute (2019) pointed out, the product of personal branding is character. It can be said that the most basic component that a person has is his/her character. Lickona (1991) defined the character as; doing the right thing despite outside pressure. According to Erich Fromm, the character; is the unchangeable structure of non-instinctive endeavors that man binds himself to humanity and the natural world (Turan, 2014, p. 76).

### **Price Becomes Credibility**

Price is the amount of money charged for a product or service, or the sum of the values that consumers exchange for the benefits of having or using the product or service (Kotler and Armstrong, 2010). In personal branding, price represents credibility.

According to McCroskey and Young (1981), theorists have defined reliability as a multidimensional concept that includes the evaluation of the target audience’s perception of the communicator (McCroskey& Young, 1981; Simons, 2002,p.21). And also, Simons (2002) stated that the concept of credibility overlaps with the broader concept of trust and can be considered a “subclass” of trust (Simons, 2002, p.22). Credibility is synonymous with believability (Alrubaian et. al., 2018, p.2829). A trusted personal brand has a very high brand value. This value constitutes the price of the personal brand. As the trust in the personal brand increases, its value increases proportionally, and its price increases. Therefore, the total value of the personal brand creates trust in personal branding.

**Place Becomes Channels**

The place is the market location or area where the merchant sell or distribute his wares so that it is available to the consumer (Anjani et al., 2018, p.263). When we evaluate this in terms of 7C, communication is the easiest and fastest way to reach the person who is a product in personal branding with their target audience or followers. Social media platforms are the most important channels for personal branding. Some of them like Facebook, Instagram, Youtube, Twitter. The number of channels used to meet the target audience is increasing day by day.

Social media has become a part of consumers' daily lives and affect consumers' consumption and self-representation (Dedeoglu&Kabasakal, 2019, p.342). Social media channels allow sharing without limitation of time and place to those who produce and share content at any time of the day with communication technologies (Kırcaova&Enginkaya, 2015). For these reasons, social media channels are the most preferred channels for all kinds of brand activities today. Social media enables personal brands to communicate directly with their followers and to communicate with them one-on-one. Choosing the most suitable social media channel for the positioning of the personal brand is the shortest way to reach the target market.

**Promotion Becomes Content**

Promotion is a communication process that consists of conscious, programmed activities to persuade the customer, sent by a business or brand to the target market and carried out under supervision to communicate with the target audience, to facilitate sales by providing information about brands, products, and services (Emgin& Süngü, 2004). Promotion is simply the connection between the producers and users. The essence of promotion is to deliver the value of the benefit offered by the brand and service to the consumer.

Malthouse (2015), defined content as a set of messages designed to attract the consumer's ability to filter what appeals to them. Companies must therefore adapt communication strategies to fit inbound messages and create customer value. Because content is a way of providing information that enables the customer to engage in a certain brand (Maltouse, 2015; Denham-Smith, 2017).

Personal branding uses content instead of a promotion. The saying "content is king" that everyone knows and is also valid for the management of personal branding. Content is the most effective way to reach the target audience and express who you are and what you do. Research has revealed that interesting content increases consumer loyalty (Stephan et al., 2015, p. 317).

**People Become Contacts**

People are the most important element of any service or experience. All people play a role in service delivery and affect the perceptions of buyers; that is, the

firm's staff, customers, and other customers in the service environment (Thompsons, 1989, p. 57).

In personal branding, people represent the contacts. The people you are in contact with, those who follow your brand or your followers on social media, that is, the people who are your target audience, are your connections. These people meet their needs by following you and the content you produce or by using your products. Reliability and consistency play an important role in understanding personal brand identity and establishing contacts.

### **Processes Become Consistency**

The process is the product and service that affects the customer's satisfaction level, it is a critical business activity that allows it to take shape in space and time (Tekin& Tellioglu, 2018, p. 13).

Producing content that is compatible with the personal brand is effective in conveying the brand's character and values directly to the consumers. While the type of content varies according to the personality and content style of the person presenting that content, the most common feature of content is consistency. Posting regular and consistent content creates a more lasting impact on consumers.

Goh et al. (2013), claimed that social media contents affect consumer purchase behavior through embedded information and persuasion. Content must be shared consistently and regularly for persuasion to be effective and sustainable (Goh et al., 2013, p. 91).

### **Physical Evidence Becomes Confirmation**

Consumers will develop a perception of the service according to the physical appearance of the store (Alnaser, Rahi, Ghani & Monsour, 2017, p.2). If the physical elements embody the service and create a perception about its quality, confirmation is also a clue about the value of the person. Social media has enabled personal branding to take a new form in which people brand themselves through the content they share on their personalized profiles (Tarnovskaya, 2017, p.30). Since personal branding does not contain tangible clues such as physical elements, the feedback of the interacted target audience is based and these are accepted as approval. What is important here is to provide consistent content, if this happens, the trust of the target audience will be gained. When trust is gained, approval by the target audience will increase. (Venciute, 2019).

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study aims to examine how young people perceive 7C (Character, Credibility, Channels, Content, Contacts, Consistency, Confirmation), which is the marketing mix of personal branding, in terms of local and foreign YouTubers. For

this purpose, the interview method that a type of qualitative research method is used. Then the following research questions were formed to cover 7 C's.

1. What do you think about the character of the Youtuber you follow? Which of the personality traits of the Youtuber does affect you? (This question is intended to measure the Character-related C of 7C)

2. What do you think about the video content of the Youtuber you follow? Do you think that the content published by Youtuber is consistent? (This question is intended to measure "Consistency", and also measures "Credibility" in 7C)

3. Is the content of the Youtuber you follow interesting? (This question measures "Content" and also measures the "Confirmation" in 7C)

4. Can you easily contact the Youtuber you follow? (This question is asked for the Contact of 7C)

5. Which social media apps do you use most besides YouTube? (This question is asked for Channels of 7C's)

#### **PARTICIPANTS**

The study was carried out with a semi-structured interview method via Zoom with 22 undergraduate students who follow local and foreign Youtubers.

The study group consists of 22 undergraduate students studying at 14 different universities. The ages of the students range from 19 to 26. 13 female and 9 male students were included in the study. The demographic data of the students are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Participant Profile

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Education status</b>	<b>University</b>
P1	22	Female	Undergraduate	Dokuz Eylül University
P2	22	Female	Undergraduate	Başkent Univesity
P3	22	Female	Undergraduate	Dokuz Eylül University
P4	23	Female	Undergraduate	Balıkesir University
P5	20	Female	Undergraduate	Kocaeli University
P6	23	Male	Undergraduate	Celal Bayar University



P7	22	Female	Undergraduate	Sakarya University
P8	20	Female	Undergraduate	Anadolu University
P9	23	Female	Undergraduate	Selçuk University
P10	23	Female	Undergraduate	Dokuz Eylül University
P11	23	Male	Undergraduate	Ege University
P12	26	Female	Undergraduate	Vienna Technical University
P13	23	Female	Undergraduate	İstanbul Technical University
P14	21	Male	Undergraduate	Katip Çelebi University
P15	23	Male	Undergraduate	Katip Çelebi University
P16	22	Male	Undergraduate	Katip Çelebi University
P17	23	Male	Undergraduate	Katip Çelebi University
P18	22	Male	Undergraduate	Katip Çelebi University
P19	20	Male	Undergraduate	Celal Bayar University
P20	19	Male	Undergraduate	Celal Bayar University
P21	25	Male	Undergraduate	Tampera University of Finland
P22	26	Male	Undergraduate	Arel University

### **DATA COLLECTION PROCESS**

The 22 participants were selected by convenience sampling method. The interviews were conducted via Zoom in March 2021, in the national pandemic restrictions. In the interviews, the participants had been given information about the study, and then the interviews were started. In total, 235 minutes of video was

recorded with the 22 participants (an average of 30 minutes each). These records were decoded by the researcher and prepared for analysis. The interviews were first transcribed and then analyzed with the content analysis. Accordingly, the data collection process was staged as follows:

**Figure 1: Data Collection Process**

Stages	Time and Process	Data
Preparation of Questions	15 days - February 2021	10 Questions
Online Interviews	1 Week - March 2021 22 Online Interviews	235 minutes one-on-one interviews, 22 participants
Analyzes and Findings	2 months - March-May 2021	The analysis of the 235-minute online interview was made by using the content analysis method.

The data was first coded separately in the analysis texts prepared for each participant. With the codes obtained, meaningful categories were identified. To test the validity and reliability of the transcription texts obtained at this stage, coding should be done by an independent researcher. The generated code list was harmonized by comparing the final figures with the code list of the study researchers. Then, the content analysis was carried out with these studies.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

In the study, to protect personal information, the participants are coded as P1, P2, P3... The interviews were recorded as videos with the permission of the participants, and then the recordings were written in Word program on the computer and analyzed with the “content analysis” method which is one of the most frequently used data analysis methods in qualitative research. In content analysis, the researcher primarily develops categories related to the research topic. Then, the frequency of words, sentences, or pictures that fall into these categories is counted to be analyzed in the later stage. A deductive path is followed in content analysis (Silverman, 2001; Özdemir, 2010). Then, coding was done with content analysis. After coding, patterns were found, and then themes and sub-themes were reached. While determining the themes, it was checked whether the expressions under each theme were consistent with themselves and with the theme title.

**VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY**

To increase the reliability of the research and to prevent data loss, the interviews were recorded. The coding made was re-coded by the expert lecturer in the field. To check the consistency between the two codes, the coders got together and reviewed the coded data. There was a 75% similarity between the themes created by the two experts. A consensus was reached on the different themes.

**FINDINGS**

In this part of the research, findings from the interviews with 22 participants are explained. The interviews were conducted with semi-structured interview form and analyzed with the content analysis method. The demographic data of the participants, the answers to the open and semi-open-ended questions were included in the content analysis for the evaluation.

Participants were asked whether they follow a local or a foreign YouTuber. If they followed both, they were asked which one they preferred the most. As seen in Table 2. 11 of the participants follow local Youtubers, 6 of them follow foreign Youtubers and 5 of them follow both local and foreign Youtubers. The participants who follow both local and foreign Youtubers indicated that they follow foreign Youtubers more than the local ones. P16 stated that he can improve his English with his preferences. Also, both P3 and P16 explained that the contents of foreign Youtubers are more interesting. P12, on the other hand, stated that she mostly follows foreign Youtubers because he lives abroad.

**Table 2:** Youtubers Preferred by the Participants

<b>Youtubers</b>	<i>f</i>
Local Youtuber	11
Foreign Youtuber	6
Both of them	5

One participant expressed his thoughts about foreign Youtubers like that “Foreign Youtubers don't share things from our culture, they don't interest me, so they are different (P17)”. Some participants stated that the content of foreign Youtubers is more interesting. “Youtube now has stereotypical content, and this has caused similarities even though cultures are different. Despite this, there is still more original content from foreigners (21)”.

Considering the answers given by the participants, it has been revealed that the most effective factor in following foreign Youtubers is language. In addition, it

has been revealed that having original content plays an important role in Youtuber preference. And the general opinion is that foreign Youtubers are more successful at producing original content and local Youtubers are generally following emerging trends. Another factor is the trust in the shared information, the followers rely more on the information shared by foreign Youtubers in fields such as education, sports, and art. For example, one participant expressed her feelings;

“I follow sports and I trust the information given by the foreign Youtuber on food supplements more than the local Youtuber (P1)”.

Participants were asked in which areas they prefer Youtubers who produce video content. As seen in Table 3, participants mostly follow Youtubers who broadcast on entertainment and beauty.

**Table 3:** The Focus Areas of Youtubers

Areas	F	Areas	f
Entertainment	7	Food	2
Education	6	Current Issues	2
Beauty	5	Art	2
Professional	4	Travel	2
Sport	3	Game	1
Music	2	Food	2

Participants were asked about the social media applications they use most, apart from YouTube. This question measures the “channel” of 7C’s. And as in Table 4, the participants mostly follow social media applications such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and Twitch, respectively. Participants stated that the reason for following Youtubers also through other channels is that their contents are interesting and sometimes the contents can be different in other channels. For example, they do not want to miss it if Youtubers produce content more often on Instagram.

**Table 4:** Social Media Apps Followed by Participants

Social Media Apps	<i>f</i>
Instagram	17
Twitter	9
Facebook	4
I don't follow another social media app	2
Twitch	1

The participants were asked how often they watched YouTube videos, and as seen in Table 5, most of the participants follow Youtuber every day. The participants stated that the biggest impact on this daily following behavior was the lockdown in the pandemic.

**Table 5:** Frequency of Following Youtubers

Frequency of Youtuber Following	<i>f</i>
Everyday	9
One day per week	6
A few days a week	4
Every 15 days	3

“I watch it every day (P12)”. She said that she spends more time watching Youtube during study breaks, eating or when she wants to clear her mind because she can’t go out and socialize. “Most of my time is spent in front of the computer in this process, so I watch Youtube more, about 5 hours a day (P17)”.

The first research question is “What do you think about the character of the Youtuber you follow? This question is intended to measure the character-related C of 7C. Which of the personality traits of the Youtuber does affect you?” The findings

show us (Table 6) that the participants attach importance to the personality traits of Youtubers, especially they like fun and sympathetic Youtubers. It has been observed that the participants like the Youtuber to be similar to themselves and to find some of their things on the Youtuber. At the same time, it is preferred that the Youtubers are an expert in their field and has an experience that can contribute to their audience. Just three participants stated that the Youtuber they follow is not like them. Some of the participants expressed this situation following; “I value to sincerity the most in the Youtubers I follow, and it is important for me that the Youtuber do not talk too much and talk directly about to the content (P3)”.

“I can say that they are entrepreneurs. They might say things like let's do it, let's get it done. I try to be like them, but sometimes life doesn't give you the opportunity. But apart from that, of course, we overlap in terms of our interest in the profession and we have common aspects ( P6)” and expressed his views on the personality of the Youtuber he follows.

“We live very different lives, we are never the same. I follow those lives mostly because I am curious about them (P13)”.

**Table 6:** Character of the Following Youtubers

Theme	Sub- Theme
Youtuber's Personality	23 Funny
	13 Sympathetic
	6 Knowledgeable and smart
	6 Intimate
	2 Beautiful
	2 Charmy
Identify with followers	2 Trustworthy
	19 Like me
	3 Doesn't like me
	2 Professional common ground

Expertise	7 Contributing to different areas
	7 Contributing to my field of interest
	2 Good Communicator
	2 Interesting Contents

The second research question is “What do you think about the video content of the Youtuber you follow? Do you think that the content published by Youtuber is consistent?” What is wanted to be learned with this question is “Consistency”, which is one of the 7Cs. This question also measures “Credibility” in 7C. With this question, it is aimed to measure whether the content affects the trust of the followers in Youtubers. When the reliability of the Youtuber was asked, 15 participants said that they trust, while 12 participants stated that they do not trust. The common answer of the distrustful participants emphasized that most of the content is for advertising and professional collaborations, therefore it is not realistic and contains advertisements.

“Youtube videos seem like they are just made to advertise brands. (P13)”  
 The common evidence provided by the participants, who stated that they do not trust Youtuber’s content, is that the content described without providing the source and data arouses suspicion.

“If the content that Youtuber tells and produces is not consistent, the thoughts and information they want to pass with that content will not be transferred to the followers. Therefore, consistency is very important (P6).”

“There is a lot of information pollution on the internet, so I don't believe in the content that is told without showing any data or source or experience (P17)”.

“For me, consistency and credibility of the content are very important, but Youtube posts are now seen as a money-making tool. Youtubers change their posts according to current topics and suggestions that offer more income for more followers (P21)”.

“I trust Youtuber's content, but I review more than one Youtuber, compare and then decide. If I want to learn something, I follow multiple Youtubers. I mostly try to find the truth according to different Youtubers (P3)”.

According to the findings, foreign Youtubers are more trusted than domestic Youtubers. “I follow Youtubers especially in the field of beauty and sports, but even in these fields, foreign Youtubers give me more confidence. It's like they're investigating more of what they're talking about (P1)”.

Again, one of the participants, “Since I moved to Vienna for university education, I have been following foreign Youtubers more and I see that they are better equipped especially in documentary, travel, or life-related subjects. They also specialize in a specific subject, on the other hand, local Youtubers produce content on every subject and produce shallow content to be liked (P12)”. Table 7 shows the theme obtained from the findings.

**Table 7:** The Consistency of the video content

Theme	Sub-Theme
Content Reliability	15 Consistency is really important
	8 Interest for researching from other sources
	7 Consistency is not important
	5 Data and references must be submitted
	3 It must be stable

The third question of the research is “Is the content of the Youtuber you follow interesting?”. This question measures the “Content” of 7C’s. This question also measures the “Confirmation” in 7C. With this question, it was aimed to measure how the content produced by Youtubers is appreciated by the followers. According to the findings, the content of YouTube posts is perceived as “interesting” by followers. Most of the followers stated that they unfollowed if the content was not interesting. The majority of the participants stated that they prefer to follow Youtubers who produce content that contributes to them. A participant who thinks that Youtubers produced more original content when they first started, but that they tried to produce similar content frequently over time, expressed her thoughts as follows: “It has become difficult to find quality content, their content was better in the past, now the same things are constantly repeating. I get bored if I watch it all the time (P1)”.

Some participants stated that the issue they care about Youtubers is that they prepare their youtube content more carefully. One of them said, “We are always at home due to the pandemic, and in this process, I prefer content that is embellished, high-quality, and entertaining to me (P17)”.

3 participants stated that most of the contents of Youtubers are empty contents and they follow only for entertainment purposes. “Most of the content is



garbage, it has become difficult to find quality content. Because they compete, they do most of the things in order to do it, which does not sound convincing ( P21)”.

From the discourses of the participants, it can be concluded that local Youtubers imitate foreign Youtubers in their content production. Participants think that foreign Youtubers who produce creative content in different fields are more creative and that local Youtubers follow them as trendsetters. One of the participants expresses this like: “Especially since the pandemic started, I spend a lot of time on Youtube, I can say that I learn and do everything from there. I also follow for entertainment purposes and I noticed that the contents of local Youtubers are almost exact copies. This surprised me and drove me away from those Youtubers. (P3)”. Results are in Table 8.

**Table 8:** The content of the Youtuber

Theme	Sub Theme
Content of Youtube posts	15 Interesting
	6 Contributed content
	6 They are repetitive in content
	4 Funny contents
	5 Doesn't sound interesting
	3 There is empty content
	2 An effort to diversify content

Contact is important in terms of 7C, then the last research question was determined as “Can you easily contact the Youtuber you follow?”. With this question, it was aimed to measure the contact "C" of 7C. The question is “Do YouTubers establish an interactive relationship with their followers?”. As seen in Table 9, most of the participants did not try to contact Youtubers. When the participants were asked, most of them said that even if they tried to reach Youtubers, they did not believe that their messages would be seen by Youtubers, because it would be really difficult to be noticed, especially by Youtubers with a large number of followers.

One of the participants expressed his feelings following; “The audience of popular Youtubers is large, and get contact with the YouTuber is difficult in these large groups (P18)”.

When we compare domestic and foreign Youtubers, the general opinion is that it will be easier to reach local YouTubers. “For locals, at least we can access from the comments. They say that they read the comments written under their videos. Maybe it will come across that way (P2).”

The common view about foreign Youtubers is that communication cannot be established due to language barriers. Local YouTubers are thought to be easier to access. However, it is thought that it is more difficult to reach and communicate with those who have a large number of followers among local YouTubers. One of the opinions is like; “As the audience grows, communication decreases. I was following a Youtuber who produces content in the field of sports. His followers were in the 1000s. When I started, we were messaging at that time, now it is almost 300.000 and he does not even see my messages anymore ( P19)”.

**Table 9:** To Access YouTubers

Theme	Sub-Theme
Accessibility	14 I did not try to reach
	12 Accessible
	7 It's hard to reach Youtubers who have a large number of followers.
	4 I tried to reach
	4 I do not believe that I will reach
	4 It is easier to reach the local Youtuber
	3 Easier to reach Youtubers with few followers
	2 It is difficult to reach foreign Youtubers
	1 I could not reach

## CONCLUSION

This study searched the opinions of university students about the Youtubers they follow within the scope of 7C. And three themes are obtained from the findings; YouTuber's personality, identity with followers, and expertise. Participants give importance to the personality traits of Youtubers. It was observed that the participants liked the fun and sympathetic Youtubers and the YouTubers that resemble to them. At the same time, they preferred Youtubers who are experts in their field. For the followers, sincerity and personality trait are seen as more effective attributes for YouTubers to follow. The followers give importance to the fun of Youtubers and follow Youtubers similar to them more.

The second research question is "What are your opinions about the video content of the Youtuber you follow? Do you trust the content that Youtuber posts?". The theme obtained from this question is "content reliability". Participants stated that consistency is so important in trusting Youtubers. According to this when they show consistency in the content they create or in their collaborations, they give more confidence to their followers. Again, it has been revealed that Youtubers, who do not arouse the desire to research from other sources and produce content by showing the source, are more trustworthy. It turned out that the reliability of the content is important for the consistency of the Youtuber.

The third research question is "Is the content of the Youtuber you follow interesting?". The theme of this question is "Content of YouTube posts". Content is the most effective tool for Youtubers to bring their personal brands and features to their followers. Participants stated that it is very important for the content of the Youtubers they follow to be interesting and that they should either contribute or entertain while watching. The first study on the content and video strategies produced by Youtubers was the study by Waters and Jones in 2011. In the study, it was revealed that Youtubers, who produce content that can communicate interactively with their followers, can reach wider audiences. For YouTubers, who are personal brands, it is perceived as a tornado of content brands (Walters & Jones 2011; Wang & Chan-Olmsted, 2020).

YouTubers who produce original content and interact with their followers about their content are more interesting. Followers stated that they follow Youtubers that contribute to their enjoyment of life or that they can have fun in their spare time. The increase in the time spent at home, especially during the pandemic period, has also increased the time spent on Youtube. For this reason, being original and different in content has gained more importance for the participants. Complaints about repetitive and similar content push followers to make critical decisions about whether or not to follow YouTubers.

The last research question is "Can you easily contact the Youtuber you follow?". The theme of this question is "accessibility". YouTubers can be divided into micro and macro-categories based on their audience size. The common

understanding is that micro Youtubers who have fewer followers have higher accessibility by their followers. It has been stated that as the number of followers and the audience they reach increases, it becomes more difficult to reach Youtubers, and the interaction decreases. Again, the common view is that local Youtubers can be reached more easily. It was stated that the biggest factor in this was both using the same language and having fewer followers than foreign Youtubers. The results show that most of the participants have not even tried to reach out to the Youtubers because they think the Youtubers would not respond anyways. In order to break this pre-judgment, Youtubers should interact with their followers in various ways (through comments or via e-mail), so that they can provide more targeted direct interaction and communication for their personal brand management. In terms of accessibility, most of the followers do not try to reach Youtubers.

Personal branding also varies according to the field of 7 C or according to the person branding. For example, in this study, content, and credibility came to the fore the most from 7C for Youtubers. Contact for this study is only at the social media level.

#### **IMPLICATION AND LIMITATION**

Based on the findings, the following points can contribute both to companies using YouTubers to promote their brands and to Youtubers.

For the followers, sincerity and a personality trait that they feel closer to them are seen as more effective in continuing to follow and being influenced by the Youtuber. Producing more original content and not imitating foreign Youtubers can help local Youtubers to be better perceived by their followers. And in this way, they can reach wider audiences.

Producing consistent content with a certain style is more trustworthy for followers than repeated popular content. Furthermore, using references and data help followers to trust the Youtuber. YouTubers should not frame their content entirely around ads, even if they collaborate with brands to advertise products to maintain their trust in followers.

Although Youtube is the primary way to reach their target audience, YouTubers need to use other social media channels actively to increase interaction.

The results show that most of the participants have not even tried to reach out to the Youtubers because they think the Youtubers would not respond anyways. In order to break this pre-judgment, Youtubers should interact with their followers in various ways as possible. This helps them to enrich their personal brand.

This study has some limitations. The data was collected from participants from Turkey through the online platform Zoom, and face-to-face interviews could not be made due to Covid. And the study was conducted only with 22 university students. In the study, the participants were asked to answer the questions by thinking only about the Youtubers they follow, without choosing any sector. Future studies

can focus on a specific sector as beauty or esports. In this study 7C of personal branding was evaluated for social media phenomena. Future studies can be conducted on the business or scientist to reveal which C in 7C is more dominant in a comparative way.

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