

## Introduction

YouTube's #haul inspires many videos that regularly amass millions of views. These hauls—videos in which creators showcase newly bought clothing, often purchased from fast fashion companies—can significantly impact viewer behavior. As a result of this powerful influence and the excessive spending glorified in #haul videos, hauls feed into a culture of over-consumption, encourage unsustainable behavior, and ultimately fuel the environmental crisis. Amid this trend, some creators have begun posting under the hashtag #antihaul, aiming to discourage the over-consumption displayed in #hauls by sharing products they would not purchase.

While many #antihaul videos continue to be posted, it remains unclear whether they are being created with sustainability in mind. In this project, we examine the extent to which #antihaul creators have deviated from their original desire to promote conscious consumerism. We contribute to ongoing HCI discourse exploring how social media platforms can promote sustainability. These topics are being further explored in ongoing research quantifying the concepts of consumerism and anti-consumerism to be studied on algorithmic platforms.

Throughout this project, we collected a dataset of #antihaul videos, manually labeled the videos, and conducted statistical analysis to determine which motivations were most popular, evaluating their association with viewer engagement. Ultimately, we answered the following questions:

- What inspires creators to post #antihaul videos? Are these motivations linked to viewer engagement levels?
- What do the most common motivations of #antihaul content creators suggest about their commitment to sustainability?
- How can YouTube and other social media platforms promote these videos to bring awareness to over-consumption?

## Background

As seen in several social media campaigns, the parasocial relationships viewers develop with creators on platforms like YouTube make digital content highly impactful [3, 4]. As a result of this powerful influence and the excessive spending glorified in #haul videos, hauls feed into a culture of over-consumption, encourage unsustainable behavior, and ultimately fuel the environmental crisis. As a result, content discussing excessive consumption can have significant impacts on consumer behavior, ultimately affecting our society's sustainability. Research on #haul shows that influencers may unknowingly contribute to a culture of over-consumption [2], encouraging unsustainable behavior regardless of intention.

The rise of #antihaul content has enriched the discourse surrounding consumption-focused content. #antihaul has become increasingly impactful as creators take advantage of YouTube's recommendation algorithm to accumulate more views than #haul videos [1]. There has also been research analyzing the extent to which anti-hauls truly promote anti-consumerism. While antihaul creators have made anti-consumerism content more accessible, they do not necessarily provide a lasting criticism of capitalism [5].

Past research on #antihaul content determined several categories of creator motivation as outlined in Table 1 [5]. Throughout this project, we used these categories to guide our analysis of #antihaul content. Previous research has not answered whether #antihaul creators are following their original purpose to discourage unsustainable behavior, or if they are simply joining a trend. Furthermore, it is unclear how these motivations might correlate to viewer engagement. These are the questions we focused on answering throughout this project.

Motivation	Description
1. Representation	Creators who feel products are not being developed with all possible consumers in mind (e.g. foundation with an inadequate range of shades)
2. Environment	Creators who feel products are unsustainable or not environmentally friendly (e.g. products with excessive packaging)
3. 'Not For Me'	Creators who dislike products due to personal preferences
4. 'Too Much'	Creators who feel overwhelmed by new products being constantly released or already own enough
5. Shopping Smart	Creators who want to save money or feel that poor quality products are being produced

Table 1. #antihaul Motivations From [5]

## Data Collection and Cleaning

The first step in this process was creating Python code to extract a list of #antihaul YouTube videos using the YouTube's public Data API. To take advantage of the increase in consumption that typically arises with back-to-school season and the holidays, we included videos published within the time frame of August 1, 2023 to December 31, 2023.

Collecting videos with these publication dates ensured that at least six months had passed before the time of collection in early June 2024, allowing the videos to accumulate views, likes, and comments. We filtered our search using the following criteria:

- All video lengths** were allowed to maximize the number of #antihaul videos retrieved.
- Non-English videos** were excluded from our search as English is the shared language of our research team.
- 100 views** was set as the minimum to ensure that videos had enough content and viewer engagement to be meaningful for our project.

Our search returned a list of 1026 videos, including their title, channelID, channel, videoID, description, publishTime, viewCount, likeCount, commentCount, and link.

Secondly, we manually reviewed and cleaned the data. Due to the slightly unreliable nature of YouTube's Data API, some videos were not in English or did not relate entirely to #antihaul despite our filtering. These videos, along with videos without working links, were eliminated from our dataset. Finally, we were left with a list of 120 valid #antihaul videos.

## Analysis

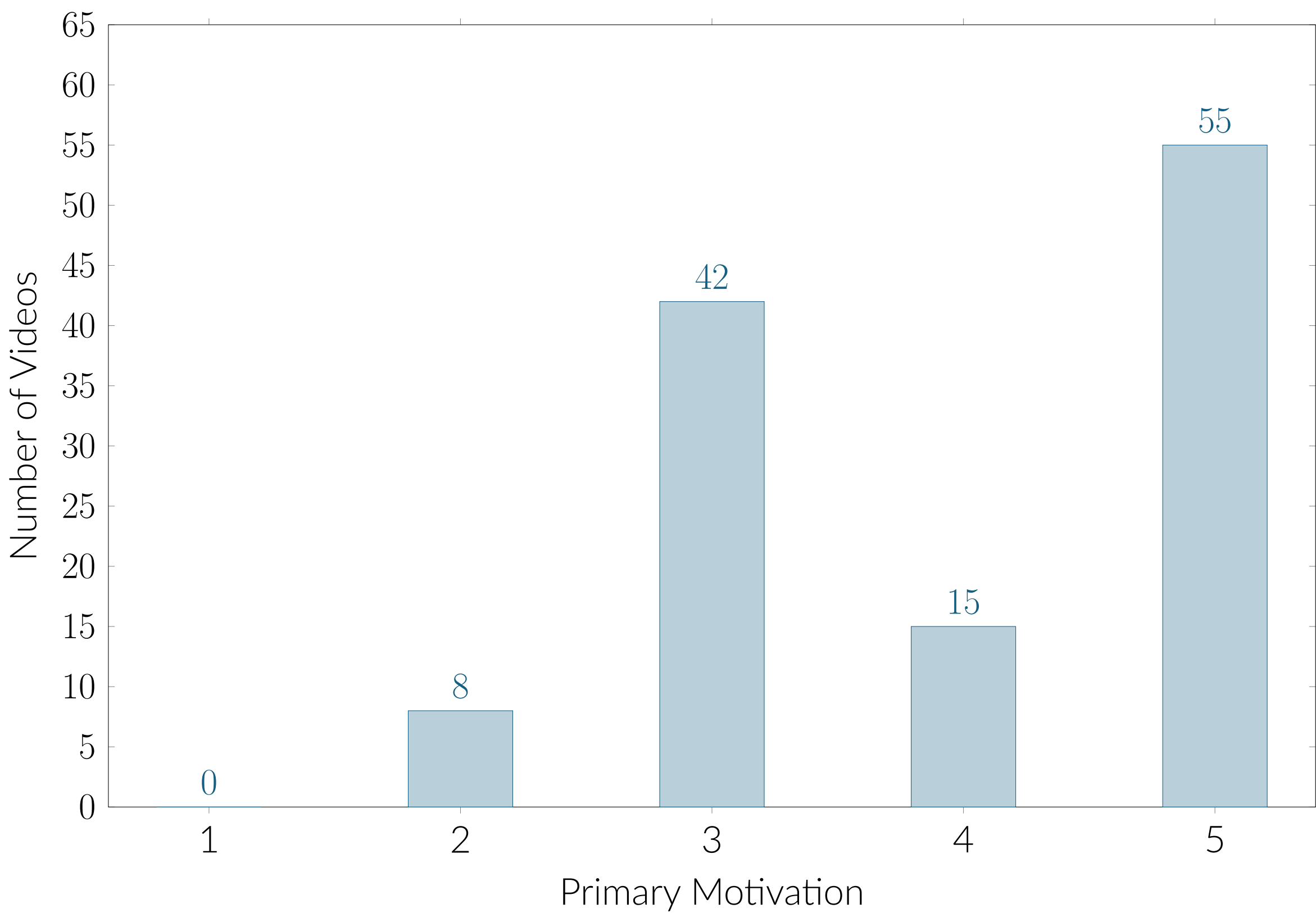
For our first round of qualitative analysis, we selected a random subset of 20 videos. All members of the research team watched these videos and took notes regarding the motivation of the creator. We categorized these videos into the motivations outlined in Table 1. After watching the videos, we discussed the motivations behind each one. This process was repeated three times before we calculated Fleiss' kappa to evaluate inter-rater reliability among the research team. Once the kappa scores reached acceptable levels of agreement, each team member could code additional subsets of videos without consulting the other members. This process continued until every video in our final dataset had been watched by at least one member of the research team.

We then began our quantitative analysis, specifically focusing on understanding the relationship between viewer engagement and video motivation. Firstly, we determined how often each motivation was cited among antihaul videos; these results are presented in Figure 1. Then, in order to evaluate the association between viewer engagement and video motivation, we utilized Python to conduct statistical analysis. In particular, we conducted repeated multinomial logistic regression (MLR) sampling with random 80-20 train-test splits, aggregating the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) across the splits. This repeated sampling allowed us to ensure reliable predictions across data subsets. We also used a chi-square tests to further support our findings regarding any potential association between viewer engagement and motivation.

Lastly, we calculated five-number summaries for the like and comment rates per 100 views of #antihaul videos (see equations 1 and 2). We evaluated the like and comment rates for our sampled #antihaul videos as a whole as well as separate like and comment rates for each specific motivation.

$$like\_rate = (like\_count/view\_count) * 100 \tag{1}$$

$$comment\_rate = (comment\_count/view\_count) * 100 \tag{2}$$



## Findings

Upon conducting chi-square tests and iterating through repeated MLR modeling, we found no statistically significant relationship between motivation and engagement. Using equation 1, the median like rate for all #antihaul videos was 7.080. Equation 2 showed a median comment rate of 1.252. Table 2 compiles median like and comment rates for each motivation.

Ultimately, our findings suggest that though the #antihaul trend may have begun with the desire to promote conscious consumerism, #antihaul content has become increasingly focused on motivations outside of sustainability—namely, Shopping Smart and 'Not For Me.' Though our statistical analysis shows no significant relationship between motivation and engagement levels, the distribution of motivations as shown in Figure 1 and the median like and comment rates from Table 2 show that Environment is the second least common motivation and environmental #antihaul videos tend to accumulate the lowest rates of likes and comments.

The fact that the most common motivations for #antihaul videos have little to do with sustainability leads us to believe that the #antihaul trend is no longer focused on promoting conscious consumption. Rather, #antihaul content seems to be increasingly centered on saving money and buying high-quality products. Our analysis shows that Shopping Smart is not only the most common motivation for #antihaul videos, but Shopping Smart #antihaul videos also accumulate the highest rate of likes and comments. From this information, we can deduce that the #antihaul trend now focuses less on sustainability and more on purchasing quality products for as little as possible.

Motivation	like_ rate	comment_rate
1. Representation	0.0	0.0
2. Environment	5.029	0.560
3. 'Not For Me'	6.908	1.080
4. 'Too Much'	6.286	1.287
5. Shopping Smart	7.883	1.501

Table 2. Median Like and Comment Rates Per Each #antihaul Motivation

## Conclusion and Future Work

Firstly, this project allowed us to conclude that there is no significant association between motivation and viewer engagement for #antihaul videos. However, our qualitative analysis showed that the primary motivation behind #antihaul videos is Shopping Smart, which was also the motivation with the highest rates of likes and comments. This suggests that #antihaul videos focused on purchasing high quality, inexpensive products are most popular among both creators and viewers. In contrast, the #antihaul trend seem to be less focused on sustainability, as evidenced by the low number of Environment #antihaul videos being created as well as the low levels of engagement received by Environment #antihaul videos.

This project contributes to the exploration of how social media platforms can promote sustainable behavior. This project is part of ongoing research quantifying the concepts of consumerism and anti-consumerism on algorithmically governed platforms through the use of semantic document clustering and similarity graphs in categorizing #antihaul transcripts. Furthermore, we intend to study the YouTube recommendation algorithm by simulating YouTube users with sock puppet agents and analyzing YouTube's bias towards consumption-focused content.

These insights have the potential to support the development of recommendation algorithms and social media platforms that promote sustainability. With the knowledge that #antihaul content typically revolves around Shopping Smart and 'Not For Me', social media platforms can adjust their algorithms or develop new ones that will account for this preference, prioritizing sustainability-focused #antihaul content in their recommendations. By encouraging viewers to watch sustainability #antihaul content, these platforms will help bring awareness to over-consumption—an increasingly important task in light of the worsening climate crisis.

## References

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