



# Meet Gen C

The YouTube generation... in their own words

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## THE RUNDOWN

Gen C is a powerful new force in culture and commerce. Sixty-five percent are under 35 but they span the generations, empowered by technology to search out authentic content that they consume across all platforms and all screens, whenever and wherever they want. They can be difficult to reach with traditional media – there’s no one-size-fits-all solution here – but brands that take the time to understand them and properly engage with them will find a willing and influential audience.

Reaching consumers used to be a pretty simple job, but technology has changed all that. Media consumption has fragmented; mobile devices have brought content into every moment of our lives; and social media has shattered the old distinction between audience and creator. For this new group of consumers, the internet no longer sits behind a computer screen – it’s the way they live their life, and it’s second nature for them to engage with authentic content across all platforms and all screens, whenever and wherever they want.

Reaching these powerful new consumers is hard work, but it’s also a major opportunity for brands that truly understand them.

They are Gen C, and this is their story.

*"We're at an advantage due to the amount of technology we have, being able to communicate anytime and anywhere throughout the world."*

*"Our generation takes everything to the next level."*

Why are they known as Gen C? Because they thrive on **Connection, Community, Creation** and **Curation**; they're engaged and they want their voices to be heard. They're not a generation in the traditional sense – about 65% of Gen C are under 35, but regardless of how old they are, they're the sort of mavens who shape opinion and lead thought. Put simply, Gen C isn't a quirk of when or where you were born; it's a way of life.

*"Inspiration is key in my following people and I want to inspire people."*

*"The three things my generation would be synonymous with are worldly interests, personal development, and searching for meaning. It's all about communication and learning from each other."*

Gen C is unique because they are highly engaged, making purposeful decisions about the way they choose to live their lives.

They are motivated by honesty and integrity.

They are empowered by technology, living in the moment, always on.

And they're proud to give back more than they take on.

Technology is seamlessly integrated throughout Gen C life. They live in the present tense, **connecting** across all screens, all the time, everywhere. 59% say the internet is their main source of entertainment and 38% turn to their phone first when they want to be entertained, with 66% spending the same amount of time or more time watching online videos compared to TV. They haven't abandoned traditional TV viewing altogether, but they have augmented it with shares, 'likes', +1s, comments and retweets, all of which add to the first screen viewing experience.

*"I feel like I can't go anywhere without my phone... I didn't have a phone for a day or so because it was stolen, and it felt like I was on another planet."*

*"People that aren't connected with the internet, they can't function the same way in society that a lot of other people do."*

Gen C feels an urgent need to engage with the world, satisfying that hunger via **community** – both the real community of select friends and family and the virtual community of far-flung followers, fans and acquaintances. They engage in several distinct groups simultaneously, mixing influences from their friends, their passions and the world around them to create a single pool of friendships and associations.

Always on and always interacting, 55% say they're connected to 100 or more people through social sites, while 15% are connected to 500+ people. And they're happy to interact with brands too, as Intel found when it ran '[A Momentary Lapse](#)', a five-month series of time-lapse photo and video contests on YouTube. Intel anchored this program in the insight that there is an engaged community creating time-lapse videos on YouTube, and leveraged this community to create momentum with Gen C.



*"Any question can be immediately answered. Everyone is at your fingertips."*

*"A community was a physical location. Now with the internet you have communities that revolve around anything and everything."*

The act of **creating** has become second nature to Gen C, but they're selective, only adding something when they think it's relevant and they can have an impact. Eighty-three percent of Gen C have posted a picture they took but only 42% post pictures every week, while 65% have uploaded a video they created, but only 25% upload videos every week.

Uploading videos could mean making a totally original piece of content, or it could mean

putting their own spin on something that's already out there – for example over half a million Harlem shake videos have been uploaded to YouTube, and those videos have been seen over a billion times. Whatever the content, for Gen C creativity is made up of two parts; first, there's the act of creating something, and second, the act of sharing it, with both parts facilitating self-expression.

*“Usually I'm creating to share with people... And hopefully they [then] could create things of their own. I could share that passion with other people.”*

*“Creation means to make something valuable and share it with others. We do this because it's empowering and necessary for our world.”*

Gen C give back more than they take. They're natural born **curators**, quenching their thirst for connection by seeking out 'shareworthy' content, including content from advertisers, which they can use to provoke a reaction and reinforce emotional connections within their community. Just look again at those Harlem shakers – brands that uploaded their own videos received millions of views, with Pepsi (6.6 million), Red Bull (5.9 million) and Topshop (1.4 million) all finding that a good shake is ultra-shareworthy. Because for Gen C, consuming content is just the start of the process – half say that they talk to friends about videos after watching them on YouTube, and 38% say they share videos on a social network after watching them on YouTube.

*“For me something is shareworthy if it puts a smile on someone's face or it's something that would be used to strike up conversation... It's something you want to share with multiple people.”*

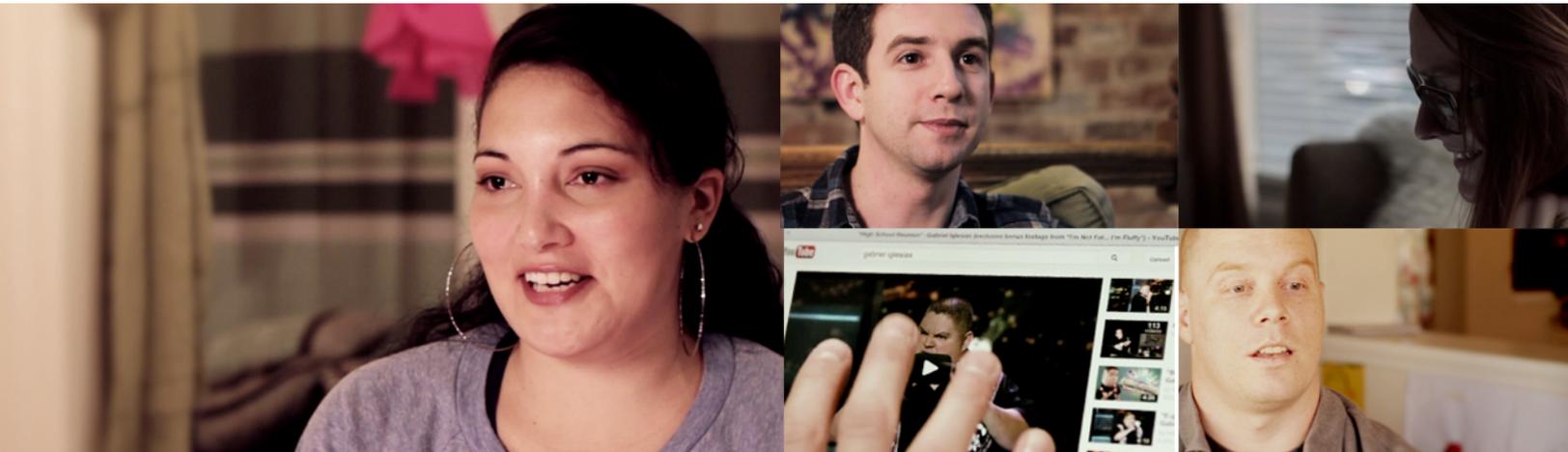
*“If I just read an article that made me think differently about an issue or made me question something or is, like, really blowing me away, I want to post that.”*

Knowledge is Gen C's currency, and inspiration and information are sought from a wide range of sources. But this is no aimless trawling – Gen C is often time-poor and has become incredibly selective when navigating the media landscape, optimizing consumption for maximum returns. They turn to trusted advisors to help them navigate the space, using email lists, social media feeds and content aggregators to map out a media ecosystem that satisfies both their functional and emotional needs. And when they find something they love, they go deep, becoming a valuable source of information themselves.

*"I stay in the know, not only so that I can be a smarter, more informed person, but also so that I can be part of the general social dialogue that's going on around me."*

*"I would say nine times out of 10, almost 10 times out of 10, if I'm watching video content online, it's because somebody has pushed it to me."*

In many ways YouTube is the voice of Gen C, offering inspiration through entertainment and education every moment. More than one in three say YouTube is their most important or second most important source of entertainment online, and 46% think of YouTube as an alternative to TV. And as you'd expect, they don't want to just passively consume; on YouTube Gen C can find content from friends, other creators and brands, which they assess in the context of that moment. And if the content helps them express their purpose, they will share it.



*"YouTube I feel is a book full of possibilities. It never ends... you can find anything you want on YouTube usually."*

*"I respect YouTube. I respect what it does. It puts this whole world of content out there that otherwise no one would have known existed. And that's really interesting."*

*"The thing about YouTube that always brings me back is the connection I feel with others when I show them a video I like or someone else shows me something that they think I would like. The videos people watch and show others define themselves."*

Gen C and YouTube have grown up together and there's an intimacy to their relationship. They

feel a special bond with the creators of YouTube content – they're kindred spirits who also Connect, Create and Curate for a Community, operating in an unmediated environment where authenticity, talent and passion are valued above all else.

*"YouTube is still about the little guy getting a video on the internet for the world to see. Sometimes funny, sometimes educational, sometimes serious, but all very personal."*

*"The diversity of content on YouTube is always there. It doesn't go away and I don't need to wait for a certain time in the future to enjoy watching something."*

Gen C openly welcomes brands into its social circle – for starters 39% say they think of YouTube as a platform to engage with brands. Being engaging, authentic and shareworthy is the cost of entry, with advertising and content both put to the same litmus test; they'll either switch off if it's not relevant or engage if it is. To appeal to them brands should emphasize the sort of authentic values and passions that can be rallied around, and then provide a rallying point.

For example, when **vitaminwater**® ran its ['uncapped' campaign](#), hosting live music events, Gen C rallied to share the fresh videos from the events as soon as they became available online. Gen C wants to participate so brands should involve them where possible, as many brands did this year at the Super Bowl, by asking Gen C to preview, vote for, and amplify their ads on YouTube. Brands can also trigger Gen C involvement by involving them in product design or connecting them with causes that matter.

*"I'll support a little-known brand that deserves recognition, that can't necessarily afford to advertise itself."*

*"I like that they pay it forward and donate to those in need. I try to do the same. They have a sense of personality and altruism that others don't."*

*"If there is a brand I love, I tend to announce it to the world!"*

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All statistics and quotes are drawn from Gen C YouTube Audience Study (Google / IPSOS / NowWhat)  
Additional Insights are drawn from Google+ Consumer Insights Lab Generation C Study (Google/Sterling 2013)