

Make the grade for back-to-school: 4 YouTube trends to inform your video strategy

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Watch time of back-to-school content on YouTube has more than tripled over the past two years.¹ If each hour watched in 2016 alone was represented by a pencil, they would stretch from Brisbane, California to Brisbane, Australia *and back*.² Our most recent research with Ipsos uncovers the latest shopping trends on YouTube, and what they mean for back-to-school marketing.

1. Video reviews are gaining popularity. Experiment with different kinds.

Back-to-school shopping isn't just backpacks and pencils—it's all of the products a family needs to get ready for the year ahead. And before making those purchases, people turn to video reviews for the information they need. In fact, in the past two years on YouTube, videos with "review" in the title had more than 50,000 years' worth of watch time on mobile alone.³

Keep in mind there's more than one kind of video review, so experiment and find what works for your brand. There's "[unboxing](#)," the first-look style that quickly became a platform staple; the versatile "[what's in my bag](#)" where YouTube creators feature what they've been carrying around; and "[shop with me](#)," a version of "[haul](#)" videos where YouTube creators take their cameras along on a shopping trip before reviewing their finds at home.

think with 

Much like we've seen with "unboxing," the current craze, "shop with me," is on a meteoric rise. In the past two years, watch time of these videos has grown over 10X on mobile alone.⁴



In the past two years, watch time of “shop with me” videos has grown over **10X** on mobile alone.

Source: YouTube Data, U.S., Classification as "shop with me" videos were based on public data such as headlines, tags, etc., and may not account for every such video available on YouTube, Jan - June 2015 and 2017

Brands can create their own version of video reviews, or partner with YouTube creators to give audiences a chance to experience their products in a fun, familiar way.

If you take the path of collaborating with an influencer on YouTube, Mark Watson of [Soldier Knows Best](#) has a few tips: “Trust that the creator has a direct line to your audience, and pick the right trend together. Give the creator room to suggest a newer trend instead of mandating the kind of video review they create.”

2. Diversity and representation are a must. Ditch the one-size-fits-all back-to-school marketing approach.

Just as video reviews help people feel more at ease when buying a product, [representative messaging does wonders to make viewers feel welcome](#). When people see themselves reflected in brand messaging, it's easier for them to see themselves buying a product.

However, many feel like brands are lagging behind when it comes to representation: 65% of parents believe companies and brands can do more to represent learners from all backgrounds in back-to-school messaging.⁵



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Source: Google /Ipsos Study, back-to-school Insights, U.S., July 2017 (n=488 parents of children aged 6-17)

Brands stand to benefit when they get it right: 81% of parents who watch YouTube say they're likely to take action—like sharing, seeking more information, and buying—after seeing a video ad that addresses back-to-school topics relevant to them.⁶

If people are seeking representation, YouTube is often where they find it. For example, [nearly two-thirds of black millennials agree that black people have a voice on YouTube; less than half say the same for TV.](#)

As a YouTube creator trying to address that representation gap, Aysha Harun of the channel [Aysha Abdul](#), notes, "Being a black, hijabi student, I didn't often see myself or my specific struggles reflected in back-to-school ads. I offer the representation I needed on my channel. But mainstream ads can be tone-setters, and it means a lot when visibility and acceptance comes from the top."

3. People are seeking advice, not just products. Share some wisdom to ease back-to-school concerns.

As students and parents seek back-to-school advice on YouTube, they're open to brands being part of the experience: 68% of parents who watch YouTube report being open to receiving back-to-school advice from brands.⁷ When brands provide tips to get through the tough stuff, it sticks: More than half of parents say video ads from companies that address their back-to-school anxieties are more memorable to them.⁸

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Messages that reflect people's challenges demonstrate a willingness to meet them where they are. Alena Maze and Joe Lee of [MAZELEE](#), a channel chronicling the life of a young, blended family with six children, offer their perspective on branded advice: "Find out what your consumers are struggling with. Don't be afraid to put that difficulty front and center because you're going to show them how you can help."

4. Viewers aren't just leaning back to watch, they're leaning in to take action. Make your back-to-school ads actionable.

In a season that's ultimately all about shopping, brands run the risk of losing engaged consumers if their ads aren't actionable. Keep in mind, viewers *like* clickable ads: Seven in 10 millennials like it when they can click on a product from an ad.⁹ Meet their demands with action-oriented ad formats and bidding strategies.

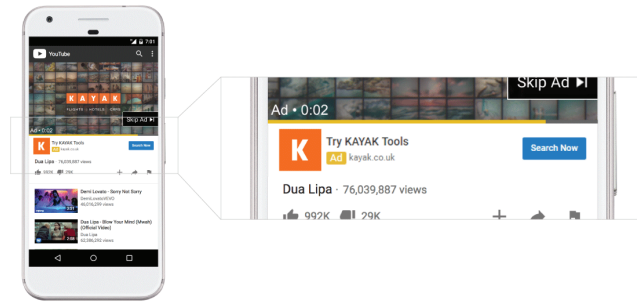


7 in 10 millennials like it when they can **click on a product** from an ad.

Source: Google/Ipsos Study, Review Video Behavior Insights, U.S., July 2017 (n=646 Millennials)

KAYAK is a great example of a brand that used video ads to spur consumer action. With [TrueView for action](#), KAYAK embedded calls-to-action directly into their video ads. To maximize effectiveness, the brand also used [target cost-per-acquisition \(CPA\) bidding](#) to get those ads in

front of viewers who are likely to take action. In essence, they were able to turn a viewing experience into a shopping experience with one click.



Stefan Petzinger, VP of EU Brand Marketing at KAYAK attributes their recent campaign's success to these action-oriented ads. "Using TrueView for action and target CPA bidding, we were able to equip our ads with motivating calls to action. We were able to lower costs by 80% and turn viewers into users."

Back-to-school season has always been one of the biggest shopping moments of the year. But with shopping decisions increasingly informed by online video—especially video reviews—it's now also one of the biggest *viewing* moments of the year. To ensure that your content doesn't get lost in the crowd, infuse it with advice, representation, and easy ways for consumers to take action.

See how brands are getting in the back-to-school spirit with the [Ads that.. Go back to school](#) playlist.

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Sources

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- 9 Google/Ipsos Study, Review Video Behavior Insights, U.S., July 2017 (n=646 Millennials)