

Marketing to Gen Xers? Here's What They're Watching on YouTube

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Want some insight for marketing to the so-called "latchkey generation?" Looking for YouTube user demographics? Check out the latest research on Gen X engagement trends on YouTube.

Generation X, born between the mid-1960s and late '70s, bore witness to the technology revolution. Its members are old enough to remember a time before the internet, but young enough to have adapted quickly to the changing technological landscape.

The incentive for brands to engage this generation on YouTube is, in a word, massive. According to Pixability, Gen Xers account for over 1.5B views every day on YouTube.¹

To better understand Gen Xers' priorities relative to their YouTube engagement, Google conducted qualitative and survey-based research in partnership with Ipsos Connect and Flamingo.²

The findings? Gen Xers' behavior on YouTube reflects broadly held assumptions about the generation: their ability to self-start, their love for nostalgia, and their desire to be in the know, just to name a few traits.

Below, check out the stats behind the YouTube behavior of Gen Xers, and

think with 

get color commentary on each trend from someone who knows a thing or two about this cohort—[Justine Bloome, head of strategy and innovation at media agency Carat](#). Justine works every day with brands like The Home Depot, MasterCard, General Motors, Disney, Mondelez, and P&G to connect with Gen X audiences.

1) Embracing nostalgia



75%

of Gen Xers watch YouTube videos that relate to past events or people.

YouTube is certainly good for a look back. It's almost a time capsule in that way. Remember that jingle you knew every word to as a kid? It's probably on YouTube. Remember that jaw-dropping scene from your favorite crime drama? It's probably on YouTube.

Top 3 kinds of nostalgic videos Gen Xers watch on YouTube

1

Videos that relate to past music events or people

Example of an actual query:
"Prince Purple Rain"
(Gen Xer, age 49)

2

Videos that relate to past entertainment and pop culture

Example of an actual query:
"Yada Yada Yada Seinfeld"
(Gen Xer, age 39)

3

Videos that relate to past commercials

Example of an actual query:
"Commercials from the '90s"
(Gen Xer, age 42)

Justine's take on Gen X using YouTube for nostalgia:

"I don't think that Gen Xers are any more nostalgic than previous generations. However, their ability to tangibly access their nostalgia—and our ability to observe that behavior through data—has changed. For example, with a number of entertainment and celebrity icons from the '80s and '90s passing on in 2016, I am sure YouTube saw huge spikes in Gen X searches for Prince, David Bowie, George Michael, and others. Part of me also wonders if this is how Gen Xers share these memories with their children—allowing them to experience it firsthand, rather than just hear their parents recount the story."

2) Staying in the know



68%

of Gen Xers watch YouTube videos to stay on top of news and pop culture.

YouTube is Gen Xers' way to keep a pulse on current events.

Top 3 reasons Gen Xers turn to YouTube for current events and pop culture

1 To stay “in the know” about their children’s world

*Example of an actual query:
“Carpool Karaoke”
(Gen Xer, age 51)*

2 To connect with their children

*Example of an actual query:
“Pokémon Go”
(Gen Xer, age 40)*

3 Because they like to know everything going on in the world

*Example of an actual query:
“Correspondents Dinner”
(Gen Xer, age 46)*

Justine's take on Gen X using YouTube to stay in the know:

“Gen X grew up with US Weekly and witnessed the dawn of reality TV. Remember ‘The Real World’ on MTV? ‘Survivor?’ Gen X had front-row seats to the rapid rise of reality TV and celebrity culture. Gen X also adapted quickly to many groundbreaking technological innovations that sped up access to news, entertainment, and personal connections—think VCRs, CDs, digital portable music players, and mobile phones. And they were early adopters of social media at scale. Staying relevant and not feeling left out is important to their identity, so it makes sense that they turn to YouTube to keep a pulse on current events.”

3) DIY on their own terms



73%
of Gen Xers watch YouTube videos
to learn how to do something.

For Gen Xers, it's important that they're able to take this how-to content at their own pace. To that end, they report making good use of the pause and replay buttons as they master a new skill.

Top 5 'how-to' content categories that Gen X turns to YouTube for

- 1 Home repair/improvement
- 2 Cooking
- 3 Technology use and repair
- 4 Arts and crafts
- 5 Beauty and personal care

Justine's take on Gen X using YouTube for DIY on their own terms:

"Gen Xers were first known as the 'latchkey generation.' Many grew up in households where both parents worked, so they found themselves home alone more so than previous generations. They took a lot of responsibility for themselves and their siblings, and subsequently developed a sense of independence and willingness to self-start. Gen Xers are now at a

place in their lives where they have the means and time to invest in their surroundings, their personal appearance, as well as their health and well-being. Comparatively, Gen Xers are less likely than Millennials to ask others for their opinions, so I am not surprised that Gen Xers use YouTube to figure something out on their own."

What this means for brands

So why does all of this matter to brand marketers? Because 75% of Gen Xers watch YouTube at least monthly on any device.³ And 64% of Gen Xers bought a product or service they saw in a video on YouTube when they were learning how to do something.⁴ All of that watching presents a significant opportunity to influence.

Sources

- 1** Pixability Software. All-time data up to Nov. 2016.
- 2** Google/Ipsos Connect, U.S., YouTube Human Stories: Gen X, n=1,004 among respondents age 35–54 who go online at least monthly, Sept. 2016. Google/Flamingo ethnographic research among 15 respondents age 35–54, Sept. 2016.
- 3,4** Google/Ipsos Connect, U.S., YouTube Human Stories: Gen X, n=1,004 respondents age 35–54 who go online at least monthly, Sept. 2016.