

3 marketing myths we debunked by studying YouTube's audience

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Creating marketing campaigns that really resonate with your target audience can be harder than it sounds. After all, consumers change—their tastes evolve, they enter different life phases, their priorities shift—and it's hard for marketers to keep up.

That's why a few years ago, a team at Google turned to YouTube, a platform that 1.5 billion people visit each month.¹ Their thinking was simple: you can learn a lot about someone based on what they watch.

Over the years, they hosted viewing parties, carried out surveys, and dug into audience behavior and habits. It turns out a lot of assumptions we make as marketers are based more on myth than reality. Of all the myths they managed to bust along the way, here are three that really stood out.

Marketing to parents? Don't forget dad

Kate Stanford, Managing Director, YouTube Ads Marketing



Of the **millennial dads** we studied, **86%** turn to YouTube for guidance on parenting topics.

Source: Google/Ipsos Connect, Ipsos research among 3,206 U.S. respondents aged 18–54; n=1,027 respondents aged 21–34 who go online at least monthly, with children 18 years or younger living in their household (biological, adopted, or stepchild) ("millennial parents"), inclusive of n=803 respondents aged 21–34 who visit YouTube at least monthly, with children 18 years or younger living in their household (biological, adopted, or stepchild) ("YouTube millennial parents"), Sept. 2016.

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“Babbling buffoons who need constant supervision.” That, according to [The New York Times](#), is how dads feel some marketers portray them. The not-so subtle message of these ads is clear: moms are the main caregivers, dads are the breadwinning backup.

That might have been the case a generation ago, but as a working mom with a husband who’s as active a parent as I am, it’s certainly not something I relate to. It’s fair to say that with the rise of same-sex households, single parents, and stay-at-home dads, today there’s no such thing as a “traditional” family structure.

Don’t believe us? Consider this: In our research, we saw that among millennial parents, dads watch [more parenting-related content](#) on YouTube than moms do. And of the millennial dads we studied, 86% turn to YouTube for guidance on parenting topics.²

What does this mean for marketers? When you’re targeting parents or running your ads alongside parenting content, think about dads as much as moms. They’re an underserved audience, which offers huge opportunities for brands that make the effort to connect with them as people rather than stereotypes.

Gen Xers: Moving from one screen to many screens

Cenk Bulbul, Head of Agency Marketing, Google



Gen Xers account for over **1.5 billion views** every day on YouTube. Among them, **75%** watch YouTube at least monthly on any device.

Sources: Pixability Software. All-time data up to Nov. 2016.

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.

We've all heard of "cord-cutters," those people ditching cable subscriptions in favor of digital platforms. It's [predicted](#) that by the end of this year, there will be 22.2 million of them in the U.S., an increase of 33.2% since 2016.

We tend to associate this behavior with millennials and Gen Z, those too young to remember the days of video rental stores, cassette players, and mobile phones the size of bricks. But that's only part of the story.

Take my generation, the so-called Gen Xers. Sure, we might not be digital natives, but that doesn't mean we're old school in our media consumption habits. In fact, [recent research](#) from Nielsen suggests we might be even more addicted to our smartphones than our younger peers are.

That's a trend we've seen play out in our YouTube research. According to Pixability, Gen Xers account for over 1.5 billion views every day on YouTube.³ Another study found that among my generation, 75% of us watch YouTube at least monthly on any device.⁴

So for marketers looking to speak to Gen Xers, think about how your campaigns can work holistically across a range of devices, both large and small.

Millennials: The 'Peter Pan' generation is growing up

Netta Gross, Marketing Manager, YouTube



93% of millennials go to YouTube to **learn how to do something.**

Source: Google/Ipsos Connect, U.S., YouTube Human Stories: Millennials, n=1,901 respondents age 21-36 who go online at least monthly, Sept. 2016.

It's been said that millennials are the "Peter Pan" generation, and in some people's eyes we will forever be aged 18 to 34. Actually, my generation is growing up and taking on new responsibilities.

According to [Pew Research](#), millennials make up 31% of the adult U.S. population and just over a third (34%) of the U.S. workforce. This year, millennials even became the [largest group of home buyers](#) and more than [16 million are now moms](#).

That's in keeping with what we've seen throughout our research.

Yes, millennials still go to YouTube for entertainment, but they're also using it to navigate their way through adulthood. Our research shows that 93% of millennials go to YouTube to learn how to do something.⁵ Struggling to build that flat-pack wardrobe? Eager to start growing an herb garden? There's a video to help with both projects.

For brands looking to target what is now the [largest demographic](#) in the U.S., the lesson is clear: don't over-rely on selfie and unicorn references. The most successful marketing campaigns are those that connect with us as individuals rather than a broad generational label.

Stéphanie Thomson
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Sources

- 1 YouTube Internal Data, Global, May 2017.
- 2 Google/Ipsos Connect, Ipsos research among 3,206 U.S. respondents aged 18–54; n=1,027 respondents aged 21–34 who go online at least monthly, with children 18 years or younger living in their household (biological, adopted, or stepchild) (“millennial parents”), inclusive of n=803 respondents aged 21–34 who visit YouTube at least monthly, with children 18 years or younger living in their household (biological, adopted, or stepchild) (“YouTube millennial parents”), Sept. 2016.
- 3 Pixability Software. All-time data up to Nov. 2016.
- 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.
- 5 Google/Ipsos Connect, U.S., YouTube Human Stories: Millennials, n=1,901 respondents age 21–36 who go online at least monthly, Sept. 2016.