



Wendy's Fires Up Its YouTube Advertising Presence to Match Shifting Audience Viewership

To build love among an audience that had shifted interests and media behaviors, Wendy's had to reinvent its marketing strategy from the ground up. This meant transforming its approach (and media plan) from spending less than 5% on digital to one where platforms like YouTube anchored its efforts.

The Challenge

Wendy's, one of the great American brands, had a simple goal: to make people fall in love with Wendy's again. And this time, its "Where's the beef?" moments would largely need to happen where its customers are spending their time: online.

The Approach

Google Preferred and TrueView help Wendy's get in front of the right people at the right time

Wendy's tackled the challenge head-on by building its digital presence from the ground up. Instead of just allocating a certain percentage of dollars to digital channels, the team is focused on getting the right messages in front of the right people at the right time. Different YouTube products allow them to do this in different ways.

Wendy's uses [Google Preferred](#) to extend the reach of its TV ads and reach light TV viewers by advertising against the top 5% most popular content on YouTube. Reaching people who are passionate and engaged on YouTube is "really helpful for us when we're generating mass awareness at the beginning of a campaign," said Ryan Kefer, digital director at MediaVest, Wendy's media agency.

"Google Preferred and TrueView let us scale fast [and] reach the right people."

For limited-time product campaigns (ghost pepper fries, anyone?) that need to drive sales and purchase consideration quickly, Wendy's uses both Google Preferred and TrueView. [TrueView](#) allows Wendy's to tell longer stories, entertain, and connect with audiences on a deeper level. "Tools like Google Preferred and TrueView let us scale fast, reach the right people, and also gut check along the way to make sure that things are going the right direction," said Brandon Rhoten, Wendy's VP of Advertising, Media, and Digital.

Engaging millennial audiences on YouTube

Wendy's leveraged both TrueView and Google Preferred to promote its pulled pork sandwiches that were available for a limited time in 2015: Google Preferred allowed Wendy's to give its 15-second TV ads greater reach and TrueView was used to promote the longer-form [Click-Your-Own-Adventure game](#). The one-of-a-kind campaign allowed viewers to interact with the ads, clicking annotations and trying different techniques to get to the bottom of Wendy's BBQ secrets.

The game got the message through to viewers quickly, driving lifts in purchase intent and search volume. "Frequency is a huge factor in breaking through on traditional media; but that's not necessarily the case when you engage someone for several minutes on YouTube. They can connect with the content almost immediately," Rhoten said.

YouTube also allowed Wendy's to tell longform stories, as it did with its "Salad Journey" video. With the goal to show—not just tell—how it makes its salads fresh every day, Wendy's strapped cameras to a head of lettuce. The result was a charming and perception-changing 90-second video journey from the farm to a local Wendy's. "YouTube allows us to tell our story in a more thorough or entertaining way that we just can't use other channels to do," Rhoten shared.

Like the pulled-pork BBQ campaign, Wendy's used both TrueView and Google Preferred to tell its salad story. With TrueView, Wendy's was able to get the longform story in front of people who care about health and nutrition. With Google Preferred, Wendy's improved the reach of its shorter TV ads. The story really resonated with audiences, driving lifts in ad recall and search volume.



Telling the Wendy's story online

Digital platforms like YouTube allow Wendy's to share its brand heritage and values with a whole new audience in a whole new way. On YouTube, Wendy's can tell transparent stories about things like how it sources its food and what goes into products in a fun, entertaining, and on-brand way.

As consumers spend more time online, Wendy's plans to continue meeting them in the moments and places it can make the most impact. The results Wendy's has seen so far with YouTube signal a bright digital future for the beloved burger brand.

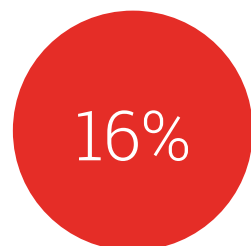
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Google Preferred

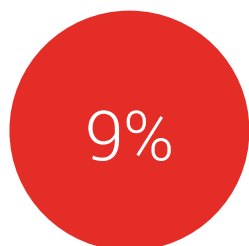
TrueView

The Results

BBQ Click-Your-Own-Adventure campaign

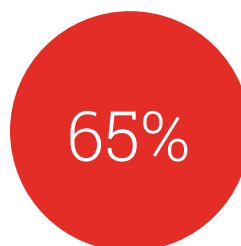


lift in ad recall



lift in purchase intent

Salad Journey campaign



lift in ad recall



lift in Google searches
for Wendy's brand