

Today's 'try before you buy' mindset is reshaping how people shop

Author

Matt Anderson

Published

Jan 2018

Topics

Video,

Consumer Insights

When was the last time you bought something without consulting a review? If you're like me, even simple purchases set off a research project worthy of an academic dissertation. And for bigger things, like my annual vacation, I'll look at so many reviews I'm surprised I don't break the internet.

Why do we do this? Well, for one, we have more options than ever before. Increased choice is great, but it can also make decisions more difficult and time-consuming. To be sure we're making the right choice, we look to those who have used the product for answers and inspiration.

While none of this is new, the way we're doing it is. In the past, we just read reviews. Today, we're increasingly turning to videos, using the richness of the format to live vicariously through other people and experience a product before we buy it.

To better understand this "try before you buy" mindset and what this new consumer decision-making process means for brands, we took a look at the YouTube data and spoke to some viewers.

Video is changing how people shop

Once upon a time, shoppers relied solely on ads, professional reviewers, and word of mouth to evaluate a product. Today's purchase behavior is much more complicated, with video playing an increasingly important role. For example, in the past year, 40% of YouTube users turned to the platform to learn more about a product before they bought it.¹

think with 



In the past year, **40%** of YouTube users turned to the platform to **learn more about a product** before they bought it.

Source: Google/Ipsos Connect, May 2017. A total of 4,917 U.S. respondents age 18-54 completed a device-agnostic survey. The study was fielded between April 27, 2017 and May 5, 2017.

People are drawn to the richness of video to help them experience a product in ways that words can't convey. As one viewer we spoke to explained about purchasing makeup, "I like being able to watch a video featuring the product rather than reading a blog post, because when reading you can't see the actual colors."

Another person we spoke with had similar thoughts about shopping for a car: "I want to actually see someone test drive it and hear their opinions." They're not alone. If you added up the time people have spent watching "First Ride" car videos on YouTube, it's equivalent to driving from New York to San Francisco over 45,000 times.²

But people are going on more than online test rides—they're also using video to virtually tag along on trips to the store.

On YouTube, the watch time of "Shop with me" videos—where viewers follow creators as they shop—has increased 1,000% over the past two years.³ With this format, viewers are able to experience the shopping journey through someone they trust, and in the process evaluate whether a product is right for them.



On YouTube, the watch time of **"Shop with me" videos**—where viewers follow creators as they shop—has increased **1,000%** over the past two years.

Source: YouTube Internal Data, U.S., Nov. 2017.

People want to hear the good and the bad

To get a full view of a product, people are actively seeking out frank reviews. As one YouTube user told us: “I want to hear the good and the bad. I also like to see how products perform in sub-optimum conditions.”

No doubt, people still look to brands for information. But that’s just one small part of their consideration process. They know brands will only tell part of the story, but they want the full picture before parting with their cash. As another viewer told us during our research: “When it’s not an actor on a commercial, it gives you a sense of security with your purchase.”

What this mean for brands

Since many users aren’t going to be able to physically touch a product before they buy it, brands need to come up with creative ways to help people “experience” it online. Think of ways to bring your product to life online so it stands out—like using [virtual reality](#) or augmented reality—such as [L’Oréal’s Makeup Genius app](#) that lets users virtually try on makeup.

There’s a whole community of creators testing and evaluating products, including yours. That means users will be validating any claims you make, so make sure your product can live up to them.

Matt Anderson

Contributor, Video Marketing at Google



Sources

1 Google/Ipsos Connect, May 2017. A total of 4,917 U.S. respondents age 18-54 completed a device-agnostic survey. The study was fielded between April 27, 2017 and May 5, 2017.

2,3 YouTube Internal Data, U.S., Nov. 2017.