

# How Demographics and Storytelling Style Affect Video Ad Effectiveness

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An ad is an ad is an ad. Or is it? Millennials have grown up with a media diet far different than the generations that came before them. Has that changed their media taste? Do brands need different types of ads to reach people of different ages? Google partnered with L'Oréal Paris to find out.

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In an age of infinite media choices, what types of ads will make consumers want to tune in? For our Unskippable Labs series, we aim to bring a little data to the art of storytelling by partnering with brands and agencies to test real-world ads and see what works and why.

Previously we've tackled [how storytelling should change for mobile](#). Up now: Should storytelling change for different age groups?

Google partnered with L'Oréal Paris to experiment with which kinds of ads connect with millennials on up.

Does the shift toward authentic, user-generated video that millennials are so familiar with have an impact on video advertising effectiveness?

## **An experiment in video advertising: "An Ad for the [Different] Ages"**

We partnered with L'Oréal Paris to experiment with video advertising for its newly launched makeup line, L'Oréal Paris La Palette Nude. We put three different types of creative content in market, using [TrueView](#), YouTube's skippable ad format. Then we measured how each age group responded to the ads in two critical ways: what people chose to watch (whether they watched 30 seconds or more, how long they watched, and if they clicked to learn more) and how that impacted the brand (brand awareness and ad recall) via a [Brand Lift](#) study.

Here are the three ads we tested:

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L'Oréal Paris, "The Glam"  
(Branded Ad :30)



### **"The Glam" (Branded Ad :30)**

This is a standard 30-second ad for L'Oréal Paris La Palette Nude with a traditional storyline and TV-grade production value. The video features a celebrity makeup artist to provide an evocative connection to the runway.

#### **The theory:**

For beauty, high-end production works. This classic makeup spot with stunning shots of the product, beautiful models, a compelling narrator, great production, and sharp editing make for a winning combination, especially among the older test audience that might be more attuned to this kind of ad.

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L'Oréal Paris, "The Show" (Blogger Tutorial 2:54)



### "The Show" (Blogger Tutorial 2:54)

In this makeup tutorial, beauty blogger "Miss Maven" Teni Panosian shows viewers how to create day-to-night looks with La Palette Nude. It's a longer story (2:54) designed to show the product in use while maintaining a high production value. There's no voice-over, only visuals and on-screen graphics to demonstrate the process and benefits of two "looks." It features a beauty blogger with an active following to connect to her engaged fans.

#### The theory:

Viewers are looking for useful, accessible content. And we know [67% of millennials agree](#) that they can find a YouTube video on anything they want to learn. This how-to video draws them in with its helpful instruction and appealing model, and because it's for makeup, simple visual instructions trump a voice-over.

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L'Oréal Paris, "The Tell"  
(UGC How-To 1:11)



### **"The Tell" (UGC How-To 1:11)**

This straightforward how-to video uses an everyday person in a style similar to other user-generated content on YouTube (simple, straight-to-camera, DIY), demonstrating a single look with the product. The content was taken directly from "The Glam," so there is no significant difference in the substance of the video, just the style.

#### **The theory:**

Relatable models are in—the "no makeup makeup" look yields more than 3 million results on YouTube. This video fits right in with the current trend, and the lower production quality is something millennials won't mind.

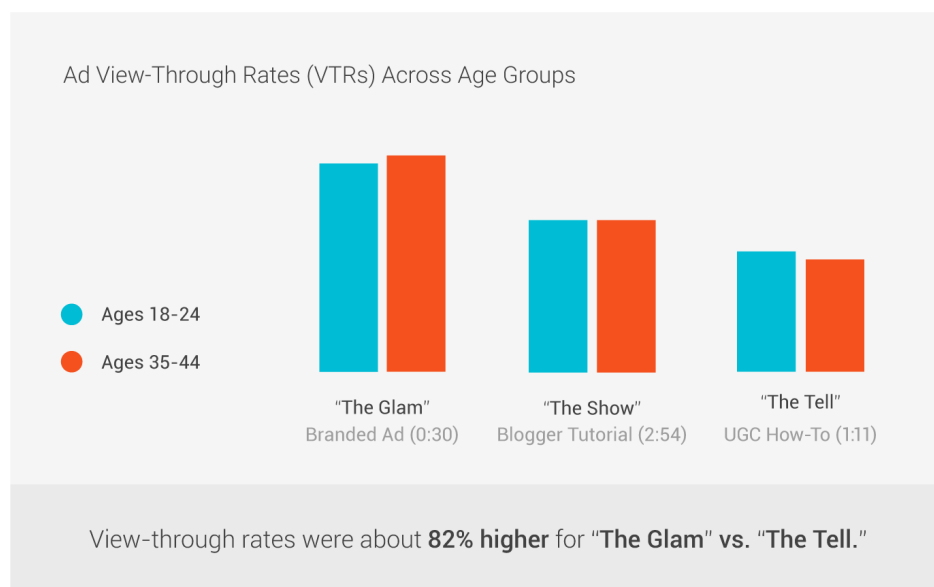
### **Findings From "An Ad for the [Different] Ages"**

Here's what we found when we looked at which of the ads people chose to watch and which had the greatest impact across three age groups: 18 to 24, 25 to 34, and 35 to 44.

## 1. People of all ages chose to watch the glossy, highly produced ad more than the other versions

Regardless of age, "The Glam," the most traditionally structured and produced video, was the most "unskippable" TrueView ad with the strongest view-through rate (VTR). In other words, more people viewed at least 30 seconds of "The Glam" than the other versions. ("The Glam" had a VTR 82% higher than "The Tell.") There was no major difference in VTR across the different age groups.

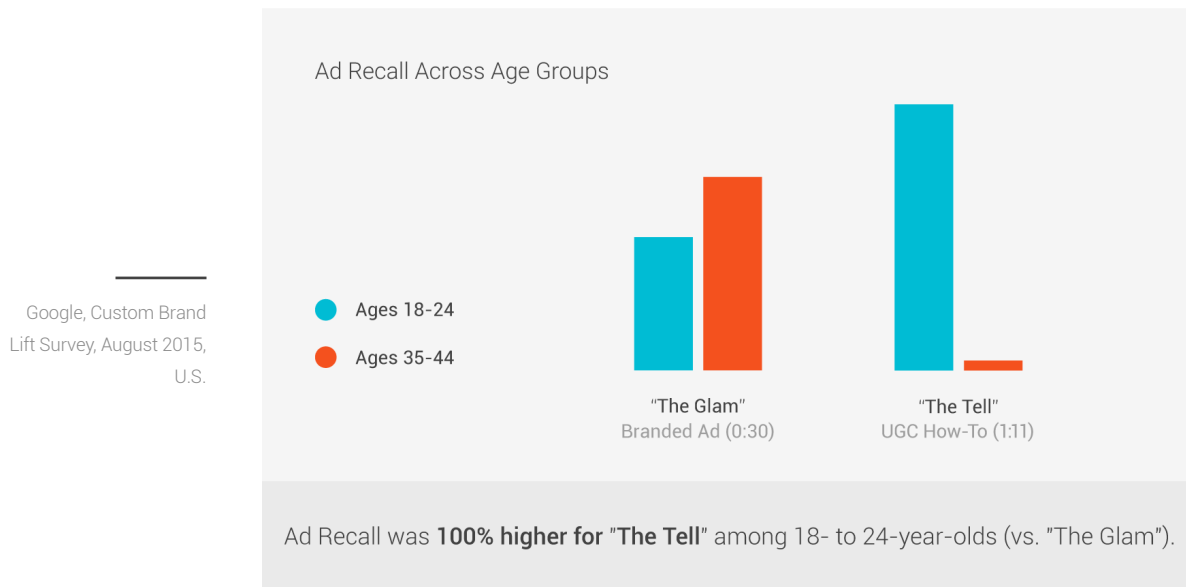
YouTube Data, August  
2015, U.S.



So, what does that tell us? First, as fast as brand advertising is changing, there's still a place for stories that grab and hold people's attention, no matter what the age of the viewer. TV ads as they are can be effective for brands on YouTube. The craft of well-framed, well-paced, beautifully shot work still has tremendous power. In our rush to discover the new creative world, we shouldn't forget what we know from the old one.

## 2. But the more direct and intimate video was most effective for younger viewers

While the viewing response was similar across the three ads we tested, the brand impact was not. "The Glam" worked most effectively for the oldest test audience, driving strong brand favorability lift—5X higher for the older demographic (35- to 44-year-olds) compared to the younger one (18- to 24-year-olds).



But for the younger audience, it turns out that "The Tell" was more effective at driving lift in ad recall and brand awareness than the other two videos, despite watching "The Glam" at a higher rate.

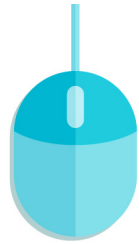
This difference in resonance for the same piece of content may open new opportunities for brands seeking to connect to younger customers. Perhaps what resonated with younger audiences was the feeling they were taking advice from a friend or a favorite YouTuber—someone like them who they related to, in a style they respond to more readily. Brands aiming to connect to younger audiences might consider a more casual, less-produced style, featuring straight-to-camera, relatable personalities.

### **3. The direct, intimate video ad style spurred more consumers—of all ages—to action**

Not only was “The Tell” more effective at driving ad recall among the younger set, it also earned the highest click-through rate (to the brand's website) across age groups, and drove the largest volume of overall clicks—more than double the click-through rate of “The Glam.”

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YouTube Data, August  
2015, U.S.



“**The Tell**” (the everyday person how-to video) generated more than **2X the click-through rate** of “**The Glam**” (the traditional ad).

Turns out, consumers are happy to take action from video ads, something we never could have uncovered in the TV-only days. And in this case, the video that looked and felt most like user-generated content was most likely to elicit a click. If your brand's goal is click-through rates, consider a straight-talking, straight-to-camera style. Even better, enable viewers to take quick action as they watch those videos with [TrueView for shopping](#).

## Implications

This experiment uncovered several insights to keep in mind about video ads, their effectiveness, and their role in a larger content strategy:

**Look beyond the view, and match your goal to the behavior you hope to elicit from your audience.** In this experiment, we found that polished, TV-style ads can work very well on YouTube. But the variation in what people watched and the brand response shows there are opportunities on YouTube to connect in ways you can't accomplish on TV alone. Depending on both the goal (click-throughs, brand awareness, or ad recall, for example) and the age of a primary audience for a video advertising campaign, you may want to consider which types of video content to put advertising dollars behind.



**A well-developed content strategy may require different content styles for consumers of different ages.** Here, we saw that younger audiences respond to stories differently; to connect with them may require storytelling that's more accessible and direct than most brands (beauty or otherwise) are used to. It does not mean that brands need to create new content specifically for a younger audience, but they might want to consider the way they are telling stories overall. The media diet of millennials may well be changing their media taste.

**Experiment more.** Pulling out aggregate truths from big masses of data alone isn't enough to reveal meaningful insights about how consumer behavior is changing. Balancing big data with controlled experiments with specific variables (like this one) can open up new opportunities for brands to learn about what works.

For example, we were intrigued as to why "The Show" didn't move the brand response across age groups. It combined the utility of a how-to with high production values. Does it suggest voice-over is more powerful than visuals and music alone? Perhaps a new experiment will tell us. The unprecedented speed and ease with which we can get data like this puts powerful tools in the hands of marketers. As we shift to a mobile-dominated media age, we may need a new mix of awe and intimacy to move consumers, and experimentation can help us get there.

## Sources

YouTube Data, August 2015, U.S.

Google, Custom Brand Lift Survey, August 2015, U.S.