



CONTENT TRENDS: PREFERENCES EMERGE ALONG GENERATIONAL FAULT LINES

A HubSpot Digital Consumer
Trends Report

• • •

by MIMI AN

Table of Contents

[Click to jump to the chapter](#)

01 /	Introduction	3
02 /	Facebook is Now a Major Content Channel	5
03 /	Ready or Not, Video is Here	7
04 /	Millennials Drive the Preference for Video	10
05 /	Preference for Video Extends to Brands	12
06 /	Do Invest In a Mix of Channels and Content - Don't Ditch Any Specific Channels Today	16
07 /	Take Demographics Into Consideration When Staffing Content Teams	18
08 /	Methodology	19

01 /

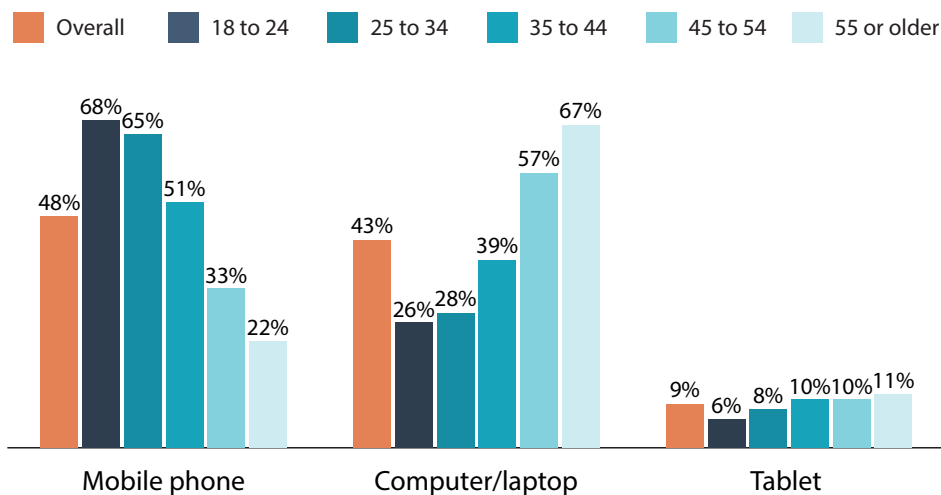
INTRODUCTION

Our recent survey of over 3,000 consumers explored the type of content and channels that best attracts people's time and attention. The clear winner is video, with interactive articles and social content emerging as close contenders.

This trend toward video has been in the making for some time now. What's different is that millennials, an age group which [roughly spans 18 to 34](#), aren't just buying sneakers and gadgets anymore. Increasingly, millennials comprise a cohort of people purchasing homes, baby clothing, and B2B software. And their strong preference for video, social, and mobile-first content has implications for marketers working across an expanding array of industries.

Younger consumers are mobile first

What device do you spend the most time on to browse the internet?



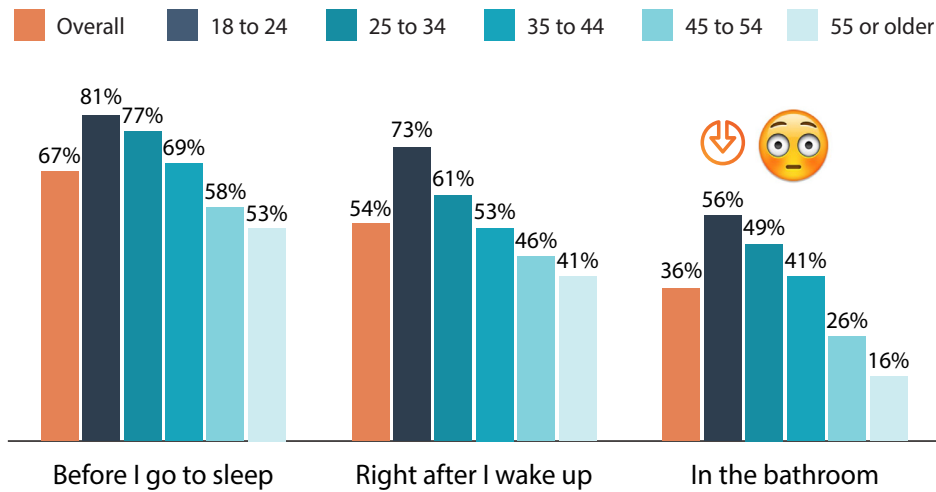
Base: 3,010 consumers in the US, Germany, Colombia, and Mexico
Source: HubSpot Content Trends Survey, Q3 2017



Mobile phones are an integral part of modern life, with many admitting they use their phones before they sleep, after they wake up, and even in the bathroom throughout the day.

Many use phones before sleeping, after waking, even in the bathroom

Where/when do you find yourself using your mobile phone?



Base: 3,010 consumers in the US, Germany, Colombia, and Mexico
Source: HubSpot Content Trends Survey, Q3 2017



02 /

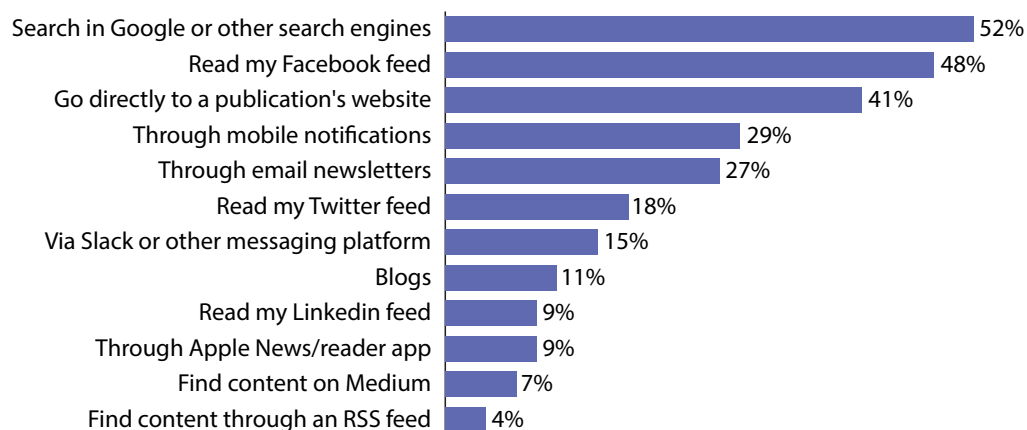
FACEBOOK IS NOW A MAJOR CONTENT CHANNEL

In July, Google announced it's overhauling its [mobile homepage](#) to feature content based on past searches. Why the change?

Google is adapting to the way people discover products and trends. Many still rely on Google to find content, but Facebook is now nearly as influential as Google. As more consumers passively discover content through their Facebook feed, Google is attempting to compete by encouraging mobile Google users to [browse suggested content](#) through their feeds rather than actively search.

Consumers use Google to search for content, and Facebook to browse content

Where do you go to catch up on news, business, and lifestyle stories online?



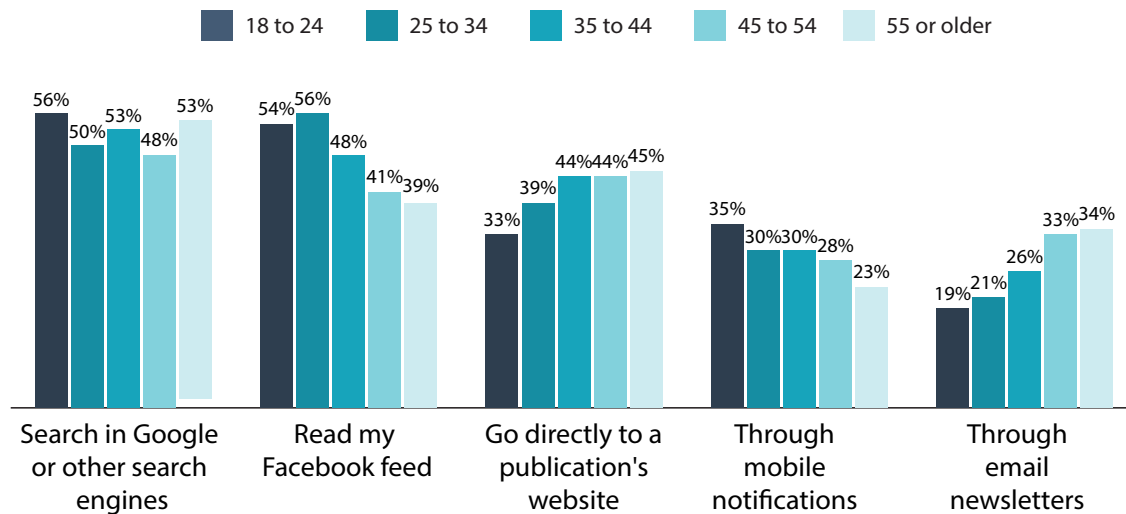
Base: 3,010 consumers in the US, Germany, Colombia, and Mexico
Source: HubSpot Content Trends Survey, Q3 2017



Google is shifting their mobile experience to cater to younger consumers, who are mobile first internet users. Millennials now favor Facebook almost as highly as Google as a source for content. In contrast, Gen X and Boomer consumers have a stronger preference for going directly to a news site or receiving email content.

Younger consumers use Facebook to get content

Where do you go to catch up on news, business, and lifestyle stories online?



Base: 3,010 consumers in the US, Germany, Colombia, and Mexico
Source: HubSpot Content Trends Survey, Q3 2017



What does this mean for marketers? SEO will continue expanding to new channels beyond search engines. SEO Marketers will now need to contend with search algorithms on Amazon or YouTube in addition to Google or Bing. With the ubiquity of Facebook, marketers will have to suffer the whims of Facebook's algorithms in order to get discovered.

Additionally, the type of 'enticing' content that needs to be developed for channels such as Facebook is very different from that for Google. It needs to be worth viewing to capture the attention of someone scrolling down a news feed. As a result, Facebook's goal to become an [all video platform](#) means their algorithm will favor and boost visual formatting in the future.

03 /

READY OR NOT, VIDEO IS HERE

This year, many industry influencers have either bemoaned or advocated for a ‘pivot to video’. Publishers such as Mic, MTV, and even [Newsweek](#) are increasingly shifting their resources to produce more video content while downsizing teams focused on written content. These changes, and resultant layoffs, sting.

As with any major change, many within the content industry are debating the merits of focusing on video. Some say it’s a trendy blip, while others argue it’s an inevitable change caused by new consumer preferences. **Our data strongly reinforces the latter argument.** Video content is very much in demand, for a couple of reasons.



Millennial News Site Mic Lays Off 25 Employees in 'Pivot To Video'
Forbes - Aug 20, 2017
The job cuts come as part of a “pivot” to video and visual journalism, according to one of the site’s co-founders, CEO Chris Altchek.



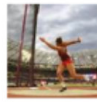
What Should You Make of the 'Pivot to Video'?
Associations Now - Aug 22, 2017
The latest buzz coming from the online publishing world is that it makes more sense to invest in video at this juncture, which means that a lot of ...



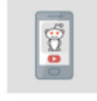
Who Has Made the 'Pivot to Video'?
Adweek - Aug 20, 2017
When Mic made the decision this past week to make the infamous pivot to video, it was the latest in a list of publications that had made similar ...



No, 'pivot to video' isn't the death of words
Mashable - Aug 17, 2017
The “pivot to video” is the product of an internet that is run by Google, Facebook, and an advertising market with little regard for anything that ...



Here's why publishers won't stop pivoting to video
Recode - Aug 17, 2017
For a much more bracing view on The Great Video Pivot, I suggest this thread from Josh Marshall, whose Talking Points Memo has flourished ...



Inside Reddit's grassroots version of the pivot to video
Digiday - Aug 17, 2017
The self-proclaimed “front page of the internet” does not want to be left in the dust by platform giants in the mad dash toward video. Today ...
Reddit ‘pivots to video’, so you can transition seamlessly between ...
International Business Times UK - Aug 18, 2017
[View all](#)



SJW-Central 'Mic' Fires 25 Employees in 'Pivot to Video'
Breitbart News - Aug 19, 2017
Mic.com has fired 25 employees in preparation for a pivot from written news to video, according to a report. “The latest new media company to ...

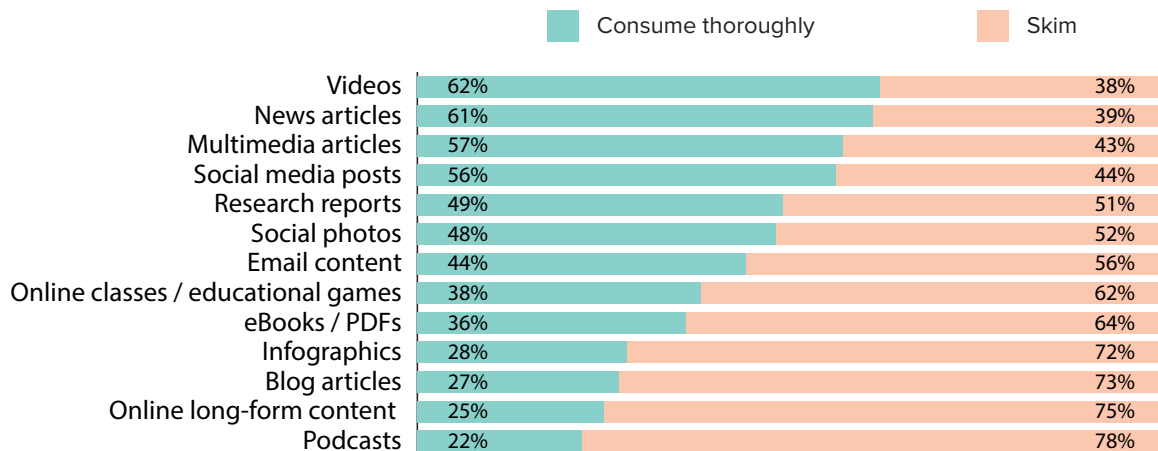


It's nearsighted: Confessions of a video producer on the 'pivot to ...
Digiday - Aug 2, 2017
An increasing number of publishers are pivoting to video in search of more audiences and better ad dollars, but pivoting alone won't solve your ...

First, our respondents tell us they're more likely to pay attention to video content, followed by news articles and in-depth multimedia articles. As long as the content is timely and engaging, people will focus and pay attention to both video and text-based content. There is a clear indication that people tend to skim most written and audio content. If you want someone's full attention, video is a great bet.

People pay attention to video and skim or multitask written content and podcasts

When it comes to content, what do you closely pay attention to and what do you skim?



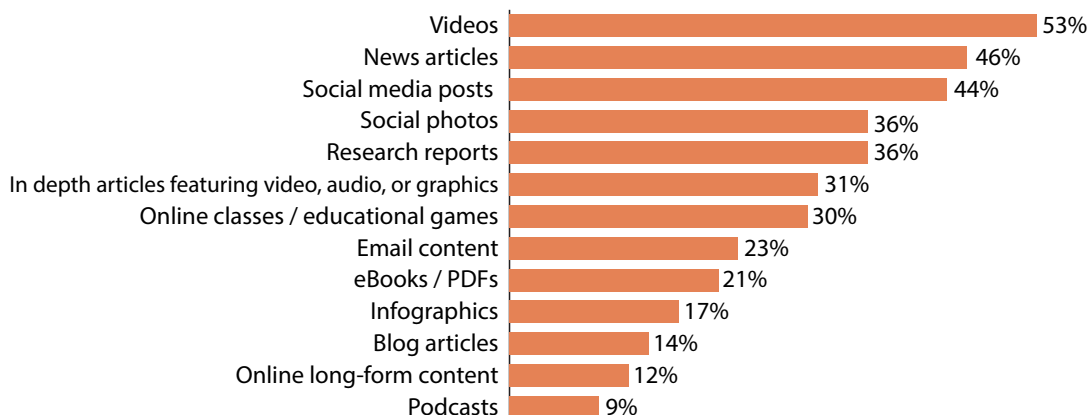
Base: 3,010 consumers in the US, Germany, Colombia, and Mexico
Source: HubSpot Content Trends Survey, Q3 2017



Second, not only do consumers pay attention to video content the most, they want to see more video content in the future (see chart below). Consumer preference for video is real, whether you're on board or not.

In the future, people want more video content

In general, what content types do you want to see more of in the future?



Base: 3,010 consumers in the US, Germany, Colombia, and Mexico
Source: HubSpot Content Trends Survey, Q3 2017



But does that mean all content teams need to abandon written content? Not exactly; there is still an audience that wants more written content in the future.

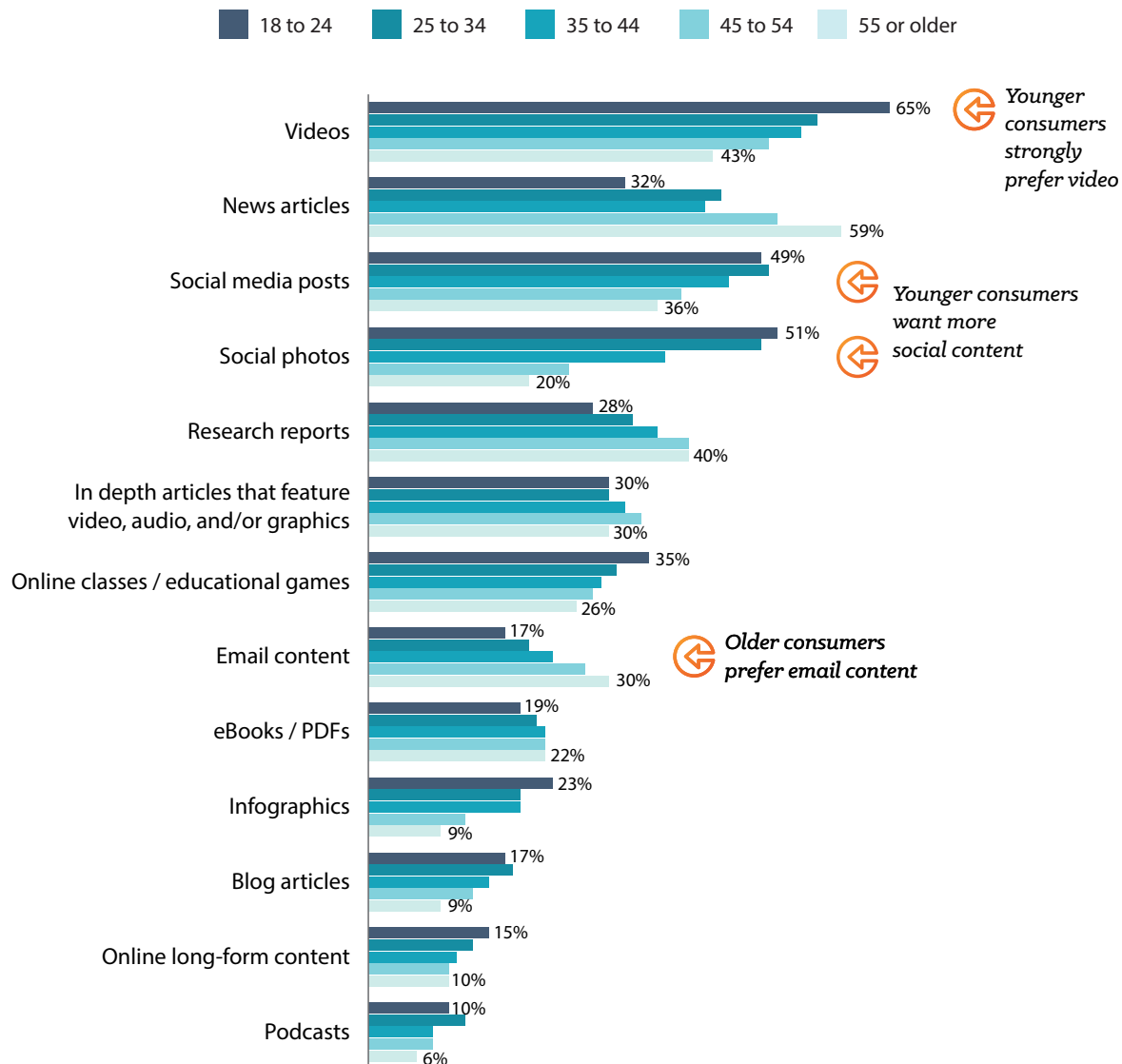
04 /

WHEN IT COMES TO CONTENT, AGE MATTERS. A LOT.

Different content preferences clearly reveal themselves when we cut our data by age (see chart below). Millennial respondents show the strongest preference for video and social content. In contrast, Gen X and Boomers prefer more news articles, research reports, and email content, meaning most traditional content teams still have interested readers.

There are clear generational differences in content preferences

In general, what content types do you want to see more of in the future?



Base: 3,010 consumers in the US, Germany, Colombia, and Mexico
Source: HubSpot Content Trends Survey, Q3 2017

The key is to balance content teams with the right ratio of traditional written content creators to video-based and social content creators. That ratio depends on the target audience of a brand or media site. Those who cater to millennials will need to increase video investment, while those who target boomers should maintain their standard email and ebook-based content and experiment with video to gauge their audience's demand. Just keep in mind, millennials are aging, and just because your audience didn't like video two years ago, doesn't mean they won't be interested in it today.

05 /

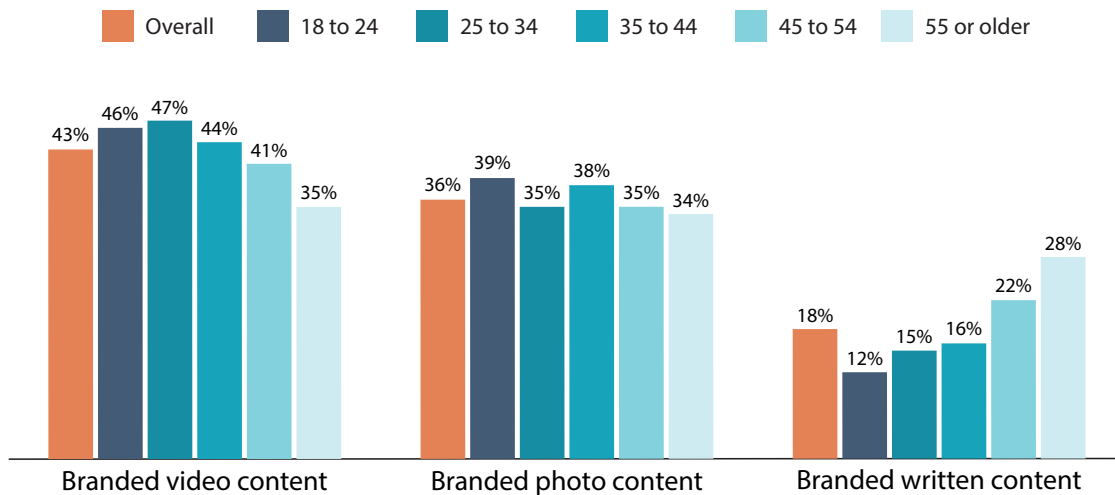
PREFERENCE FOR VIDEO EXTENDS TO BRANDS

Why is video so popular with consumers? Video content stands out the most, especially for younger consumers. Perhaps it's because few brands do video content well today, and consumers are more easily impressed. Right now when it comes to video, most brands are working blind because quality is so subjective and difficult to measure. Regardless, video content is consistently favored by consumers. The demand is there.

Admittedly, the barrier to entry for video is high: It's more expensive, it often means you're creating less content. But but across every age group, it's the most memorable content. Investing in video content today will feel like what blogging was 10 years ago. Video offers a blue ocean in terms of attention and content options. There's plenty of opportunity for those who choose invest and do it right.

Respondents agree, branded video content is the most memorable

In the past month, what type of content posted by a company (not a person) was the most memorable to you?



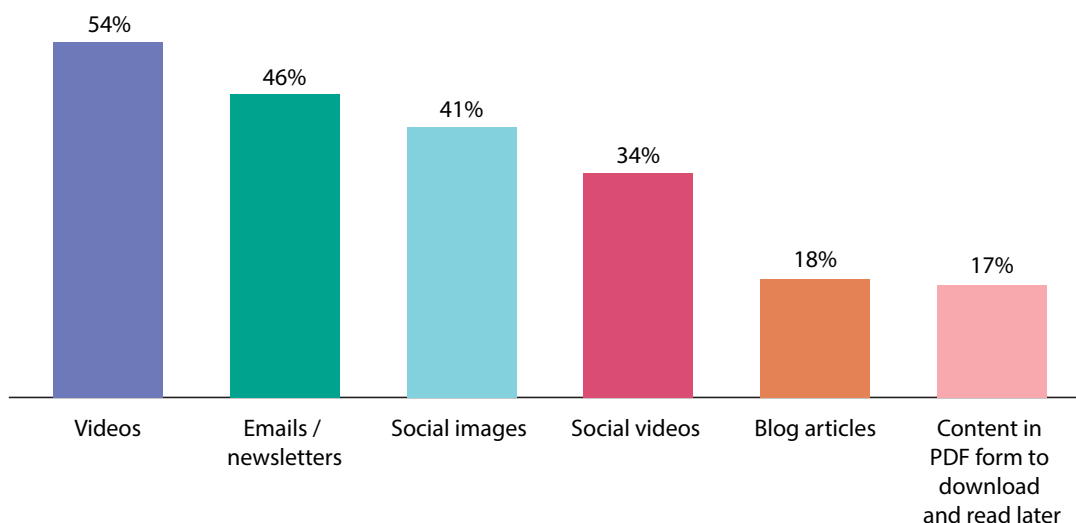
Base: 3,010 consumers in the US, Germany, Colombia, and Mexico | "Audio content" responses negligible, not shown
Source: HubSpot Content Trends Survey, Q3 2017



Additionally, branded video is nearly 3X more popular than branded blogs or ebooks. Though email is still a strong brand play today, different generational content preferences will eventually cause a shift away from email to video and social based content.

For brands, video content is preferred

What kind of content do you want to see from a brand or business you support?



Base: 3,010 consumers in the US, Germany, Colombia, and Mexico
Source: HubSpot Content Trends Survey, Q3 2017



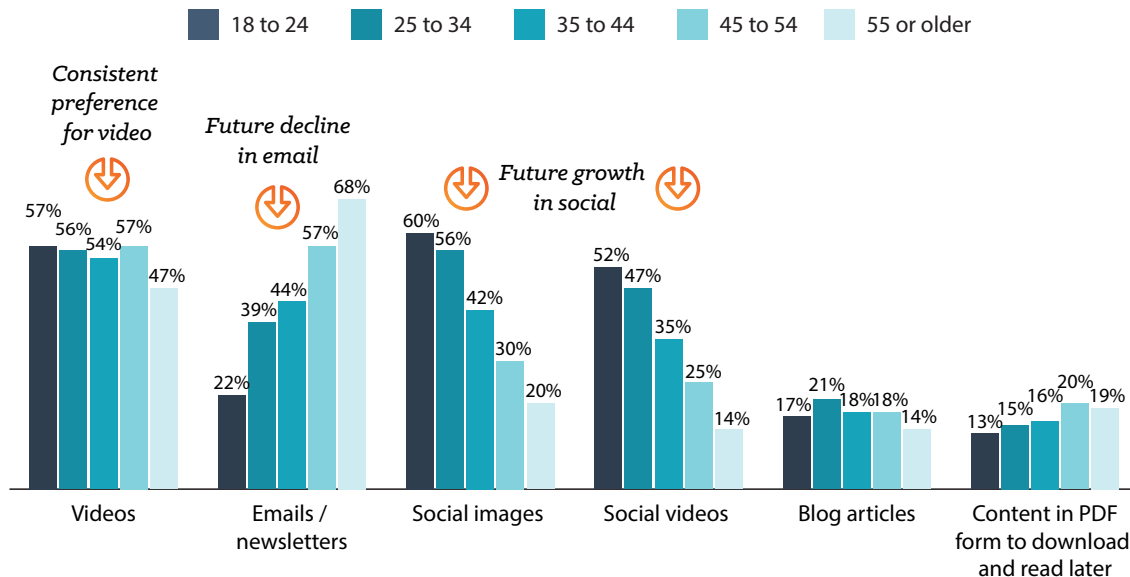
When we cut the data above by age, we found **consumers across age groups consistently wanted more branded video content**. But there were stark differences for other types of content. Just 22% of young consumers want emails from brands, compared to 68% of Boomers. Inversely, 60% half of younger respondents want to see social images from brands, compared to just 20% of boomers.

The decline of email may be due to the fact that for mobile-first millennials, when presented with a constant barrage of phone notifications (texts from friends and family, social media notifications, news notifications, and so on), an email notification is much easier to ignore. As content continues to get delivered in more visual and engaging ways, it's understandable that static emails can't capture millennials' attention.

The 'death of email' has long been predicted in the marketing industry, but our demographic data shows that it may actually happen in the near future. Regardless of a brand's target audience, marketers should prepare for the eventual decline of email as a top source of leads or new business.

Millennials are not interested in branded emails

What kind of content do you want to see from a brand or business you support?



Base: 3,010 consumers in the US, Germany, Colombia, and Mexico
Source: HubSpot Content Trends Survey, Q3 2017

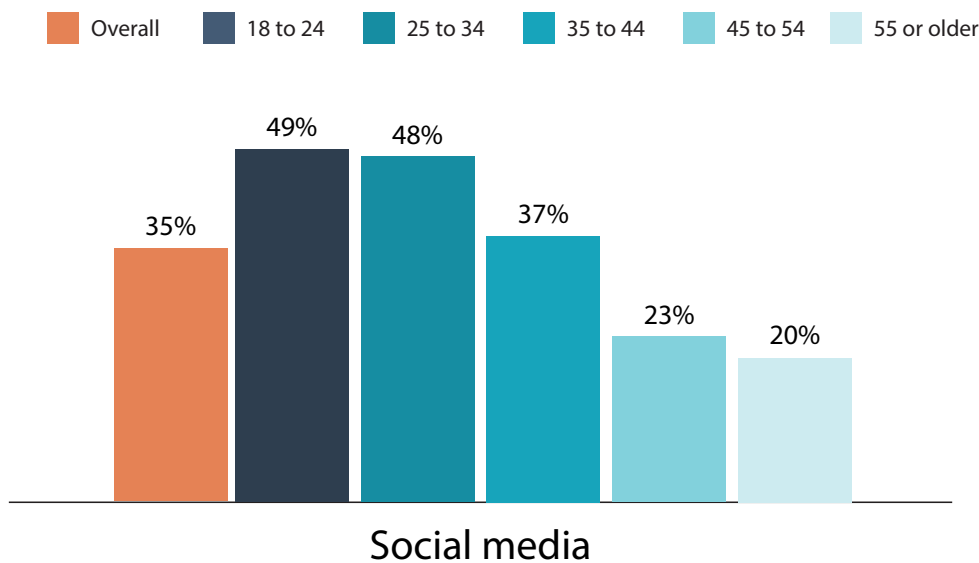


If we look to the future beyond video, as Gen Z and millennials increase their earning power, we expect brands to also focus on engagement on social social media. **Not only do younger consumers prefer to see more social media content, they use social media as a channel for product research as well.**

Younger consumers consistently shows the greatest preference for social and treats it as a valid research channel. The age of your customer should play a major role in how you shape your content strategy. As a result, marketers must provide informative content on social media to help consumers better understand their offerings. That means extending from useful written content to video and image-based content.

Social plays a bigger part in the research process for younger consumers

When you're considering buying something and want to research your options, where do you go for information?



Base: 3,010 consumers in the US, Germany, Colombia, and Mexico
Source: HubSpot Content Trends Survey, Q3 2017



06 /

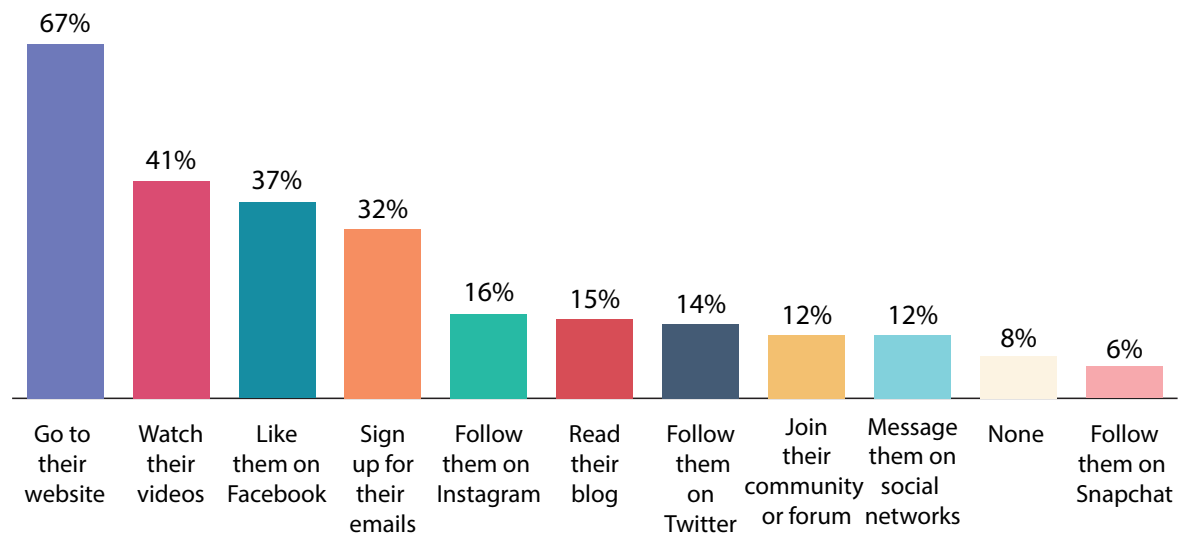
DO INVEST IN A MIX OF CHANNELS AND CONTENT. DON'T DITCH ANY SPECIFIC CHANNELS TODAY.

Consumers' changing preferences does not mean that brands should abandon email, blogs and other written content, or their website today. These content assets are still valuable, especially since there's a broad range of content preferences amongst consumers in the current state.

In fact, when we ask about what people do to proactively learn more about a brand, the top channel is still the brand's website, across all age ranges. While offsite platforms such as social media are critical to gaining consumer awareness of a brand, when someone is ready to learn more, the company website is still an important source of information.

The website is critical for brand engagement

If you like a certain brand, how do you prefer to engage with and learn more about them?



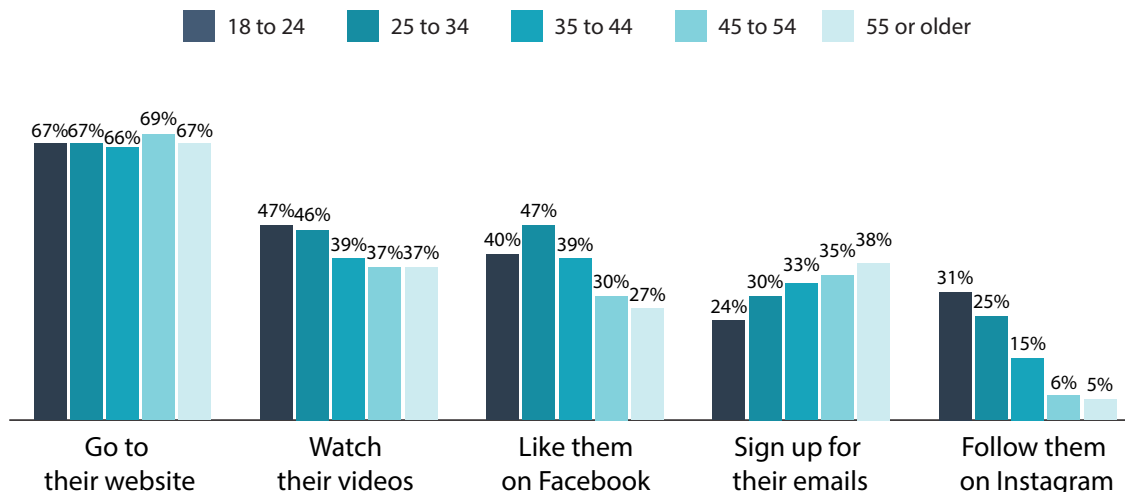
Base: 3,010 consumers in the US, Germany, Colombia, and Mexico
Source: HubSpot Content Trends Survey, Q3 2017



However, while the website will continue to be critical in the future, echoes of our earlier data show up when we review the data by age. Once again, we see higher propensity of younger consumers to seek videos and like a brand on Facebook or Instagram. Older consumers are once again more likely to want email content.

Website is important across age ranges, preferences differ for social and email

If you like a certain brand, how do you prefer to engage with and learn more about them?



Base: 3010 consumers in the US, Germany, Colombia, and Mexico
Source: HubSpot Content Trends Survey, Q3 2017



07 /

TAKE DEMOGRAPHICS INTO CONSIDERATION WHEN STAFFING CONTENT TEAMS.

As much as marketers might wish they could make their buyer preferences hold still why they catch up, this isn't the case. Even as a marketing team shifts to accommodate millennial preference for video content, know that in another 5 to 10 years, they're going to see a new generation of buyers that looks to social media, or a channel that currently doesn't exist, as a useful channel for discovery.

In the near term, we have to accept that the hype around video is real. People want more video content. Throughout this report, we've seen an especially strong and consistent preference for video and social-based content by millennials. Brands and media companies will need to staff video content creators to cater to their preferences and adjust their goals accordingly, without completely abandoning tried and true tactics that have generated success in the past.

[Jami Oetting](#), HubSpot's Content Strategy Manager, puts HubSpot's approach to video this way: Video is "about different KPIs and ways of measuring [success]. It's also important to think about how video is used throughout the funnel. Video isn't just a TOFU (top of the funnel) tactic. It can be effective for sales, customer onboarding, driving loyalty, etc. So learning how to measure video's influence and how to create effective video is key. It's also a challenge from a skill perspective for teams."

Recent news has highlighted [difficulties media organizations have experienced](#) as they pivot to video. Difficulties are to be expected when trying new channels and content types. But as more content teams change their focus, experimentation and tolerance for lower KPI numbers are necessary. Long held metrics will need to change -- after all, why should businesses measure video views against pageviews? Those who experiment early, learn fast, and recover from 'failures' will be best positioned to tap into a growing number of video watchers.

08 /

METHODOLOGY

HubSpot Research ran an online survey leveraging a general population panel of adult online consumers via Survey Sampling International. 3,010 respondents from the US, Germany, Colombia, and Mexico make up the sample. The survey was available in English, German, and Spanish and fielded in June 2017.