



KANTAR

Brand & Beyond
From YouTube



What viewers watch, who they trust,
and how they buy on YouTube



Welcome to the intention era



Video and marketing grew up together. For decades, if you wanted to reach people, you bought your way onto the screen in their living room and hoped enough of them were paying attention.

But video isn't on one screen anymore, it's on all of them, and there's more to watch than any of us could ever get through. So the choices viewers make in what they watch have become more meaningful than ever. They seek out the shows and creators they love, on their own schedule, and they give that viewing the kind of attention that has to be earned. And they're doing it all on YouTube.

When people watch with purpose, they buy with purpose too. The creators they trust to entertain and

inform them are the same ones they turn to when they're deciding what's worth their money. And as more of that discovery starts running through AI, the brands that win will be the ones that know how to share the stage with their audience's most trusted sources. Creators.

That's what this report is about. We asked Kantar to dig into how video viewing is really changing, and what it means for marketers trying to

reach — and convert — intentional audiences. Attention can be bought but intent has to be earned. Here's the why and the how.

Anne Marie

Anne Marie Nelson-Bogle
Vice President,
YouTube Ads Marketing

Viewers rank YouTube as the #1 platform when they want to research, vet, or make a decision about a brand or product

What's inside



Attention, **meet** intention

How viewing became deliberate. Instead of killing time, audiences are building daily rituals around the creators and shows they love.



The new **trust** economy

Why creators matter. Years of showing up have made creators trusted guides, and that trust is something brands can earn alongside them.



Where **minds** get made up

Where it all pays off. YouTube is the place people go to be entertained and informed. And it's where the distance between discovery and purchase collapses.



Methodology

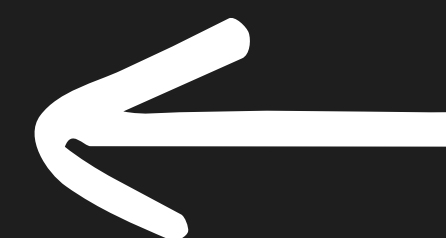
All of the quantitative data in this report, unless otherwise specified, is powered by Kantar. Kantar surveyed 7,621 weekly video viewers in the U.S., aged 18-64. Distribution across age, gender, and geographic region were controlled for.

01

**ATTENTION,
MEET**



INTENTION



**How the laidback scroll and
purposeful viewing came to coexist**

Why people watch now

Your favorite sketch comedy show. A go-to creator for fashion tips. A how-to that finally makes something tricky click. However people come to video, they come for a reason. Video is the most engaging and dynamic medium in today's media landscape, and audiences reach for it across the board: **80% of viewers say that they would rather watch a video than read text or listen to audio to be entertained.**

A further 79% prefer video to text or audio when they want to laugh, 67% to recharge, 63% to be inspired, and 63% to learn something new.

In other words, video is meeting viewer needs — whatever they may be. And, thanks to YouTube's unmatched breadth, its audiences lean in with real purpose. Why? Because only YouTube matches that intent across the whole journey — a single place to be entertained, discover, and decide. In fact, 92% of surveyed viewers say that YouTube has content that is relevant to their needs, outperforming the competitive average (81%).

92%

of surveyed viewers say that YouTube has content that is relevant to their needs



@haleypham

Creators earn the attention

What's behind YouTube relevance? YouTube creators

From finding a new show to deciding what to buy, viewers meet creators who entertain them and help them act. Because those creators are trusted and close to their communities, the whole journey can happen in one place, on one platform.

Their content earns attention and keeps people coming back.

64% of viewers will dedicate an entire session to one creator,

while 80% return to the same creators again and again (rising even higher for Gen Z to 88%).



@ZachKing

80%

**return to the same creators again and again,
rising even higher for Gen Z to 88%**

 @safiya

say they use YouTube to go deeper on a topic they care about

What's clear is that on YouTube, viewers aren't looking to kill time, they're dedicating it. 88% follow passions and interests while 87% say they "learn and grow" from the content.

And they do this repeatedly and regularly, treating creator content as premium, scheduled entertainment. **In fact, creator content is preferred by 73% of Gen Z to traditional studio-produced shows or movies.**

“I NEVER
VIDEOS RUNNING
BACKGROUND;
MY FULL
LEAVE THOSE
IN THE
THEY HAVE
ATTENTION”

Surveyed viewer
Female, U.S.

@AdamW

The living room isn't dead

But it has been transformed — and YouTube, with its billions of videos and credible creators, is driving the change. It's making the living room a more interactive place, more entertaining and more shoppable than ever before. 69% of YouTube viewers watch from the living room, while 83% say that YouTube is the platform they find the most entertaining.

Viewers also say that YouTube is the most loved (78%), most watched (81%), and most trusted (78%) video platform.

Viewers still crave watching at set times and sharing the experience with others: 62% choose to watch during primetime (6-10 p.m.). And the pull of creators means viewers engage in appointment viewing: 70% watch YouTube creator series or regularly scheduled content.

For brands, that's a highly engaged (and valuable) audience that behaves much like a TV one.

What's new is that this "primetime" behavior sits alongside the always-on, on-demand rhythm of social: snacking on short-form and feasting on long-form content, across multiple screens. From the living room to the bedroom, from the flatscreen to the phone: YouTube is driving culture.

83%

say that YouTube is the platform they find **the most entertaining**

78%

say YouTube is the most loved video platform

81%

say it's the most watched

78%

say it's the most trusted



@DesireLACAPTURE

“WHENEVER I’M WATCHING TV, I’M ON YOUTUBE”

@SubwayTakes

Surveyed viewer
Male, U.S.

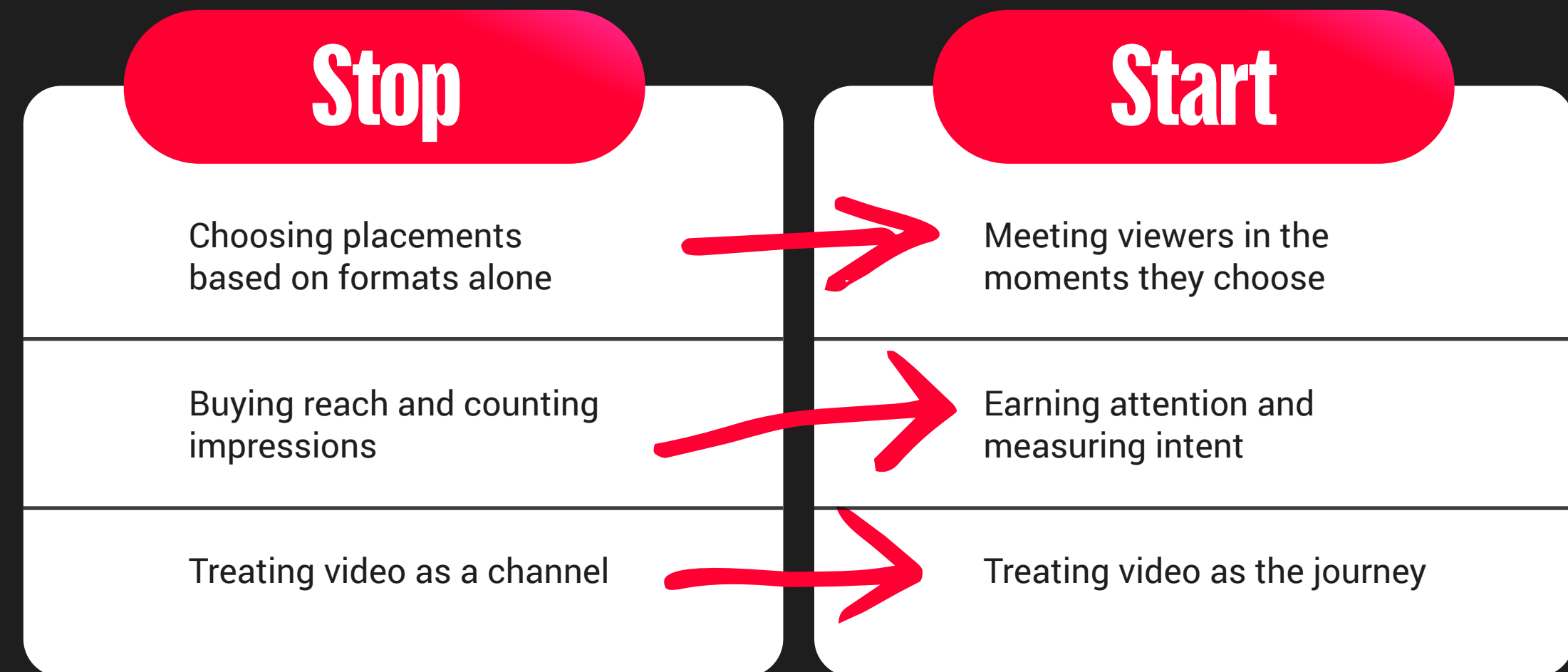
Not from Kantar survey. Source: OnePulse 2026, n1,000.

What it means for marketers:

Intentional viewing has never mattered more

It's time to plan for intent, not formats

Viewers don't think in the categories marketers often plan in. On YouTube, viewers follow what they want to watch, across whatever screen they're using. That means shifting your focus from formats and funnel stages to the intent behind the moments that viewers are choosing to lean in to.





THE NEW TRUST ECONOMY



How creators became
the voices that
viewers trust

It's a conversation, not a broadcast

In a highly fragmented media universe,
providing **a sense of belonging wins out**
over one-way broadcasting

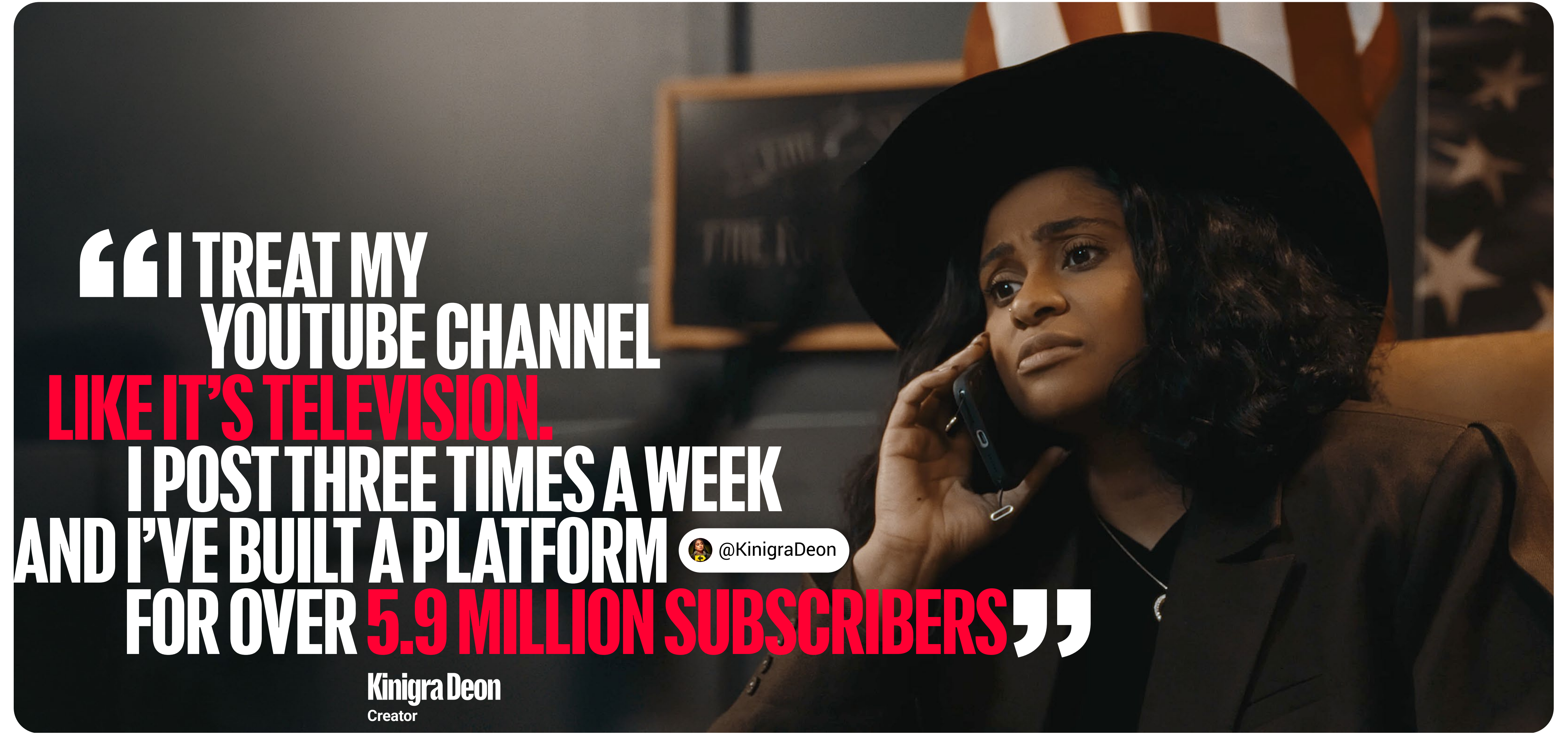
YouTube provides this on a massive scale: the content viewers want, powered by the creators they rely on.

And while creators are everywhere, their home is on YouTube. It's where they have the freedom to create, build their businesses, and interact directly with the people who follow them. As a result, their communities thrive: **65% of viewers say that creators on YouTube form communities that give them a sense of belonging.** The number rises to 79% for Gen Z.



of Gen Z viewers say that creators on YouTube form communities that give them a sense of belonging

 @KevinLangu

A woman with dark curly hair wearing a black hat and a dark blazer is talking on a black smartphone. She is looking off to the side with a serious expression. In the background, there is a chalkboard with some writing and a flag with stars.

“I TREAT MY
YOUTUBE CHANNEL
LIKE IT’S TELEVISION.
I POST THREE TIMES A WEEK
AND I’VE BUILT A PLATFORM
FOR OVER **5.9 MILLION SUBSCRIBERS**”



@KinigraDeon

Kinigra Deon
Creator

71%

of viewers see content creators as aspirational

Viewers don't just watch creators, they also look up to them. 73% say top creators on YouTube are innovative, and 71% see them as aspirational. On top of that, 75% of surveyed viewers say that creators on YouTube are the most authentic, outperforming other online platforms including Facebook (68%) and Instagram (69%).

Authentic. Aspirational. Assured.



@AlanChikinChow

Fans return again and again because they trust these creators to say what they really think. **That honesty, paired with real expertise, turns views into value.**

Trust is the ultimate multiplier

It's earned through **authentic** community connection

When a creator vouches for something, their community listens — and acts.

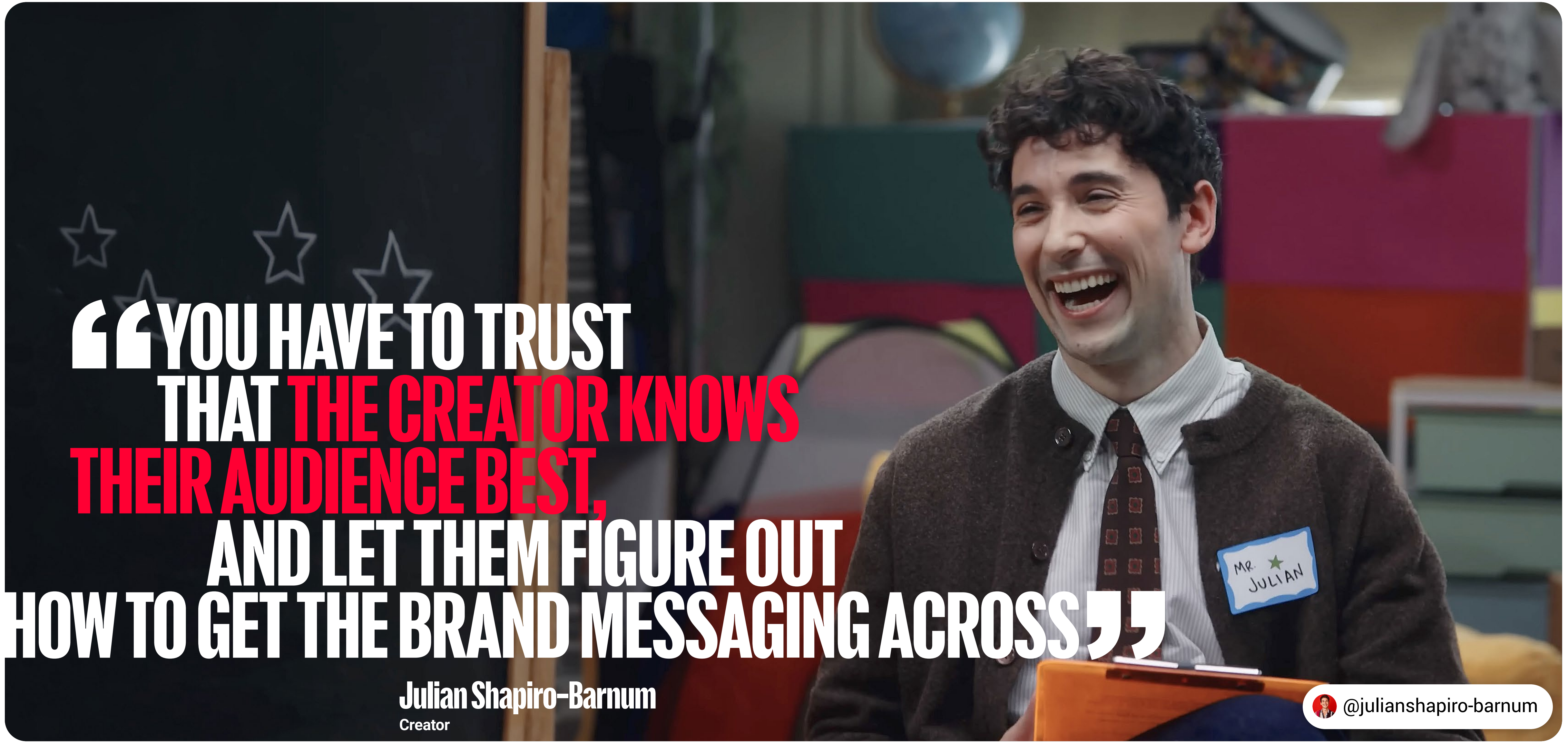
68% say a creator's context or expertise gives them the confidence to buy, and among Gen Z, 69% are more likely to buy something their favorite creator recommends. Trust, in other words, is what turns an audience into customers.

68%

say creators provide the helpful context or expertise that enables a more confident purchase decision



@DharMann



“YOU HAVE TO TRUST
THAT **THE CREATOR KNOWS**
THEIR AUDIENCE BEST,
AND LET THEM FIGURE OUT
HOW TO GET THE BRAND MESSAGING ACROSS”

Julian Shapiro-Barnum
Creator



@julianshapiro-barnum

What it means for marketers:

Creators rule the trust economy

Partner with creators who hold **your audience's trust**

It's time to shift your strategy from transactional "influencer marketing" to strategic, trust-based **partnerships**. Partner with the right creators and you aren't just buying access to their audience; you're also sharing in the hard-earned credibility that can guide, validate, and grow your brand. Authentic, community-driven recommendations directly drive intention.

Leverage YouTube Creator Partnerships

Whether you need a global superstar with millions of followers or a niche expert, YouTube has the perfect fit, with **more than 3 million vetted creators** — each with their own dedicated viewer communities.

When a creator talks about a brand on YouTube, they are **13x more likely to search** for the brand and **5x times more likely to buy it**.



 @rhettandlink

HOW WE WHERE 3 MINDS GET MADE UP



Why the vet-and-verify loop
makes YouTube indispensable



From discovery

Viewers rank YouTube



#1

for when they want to research,
vet, or make a decision about a brand

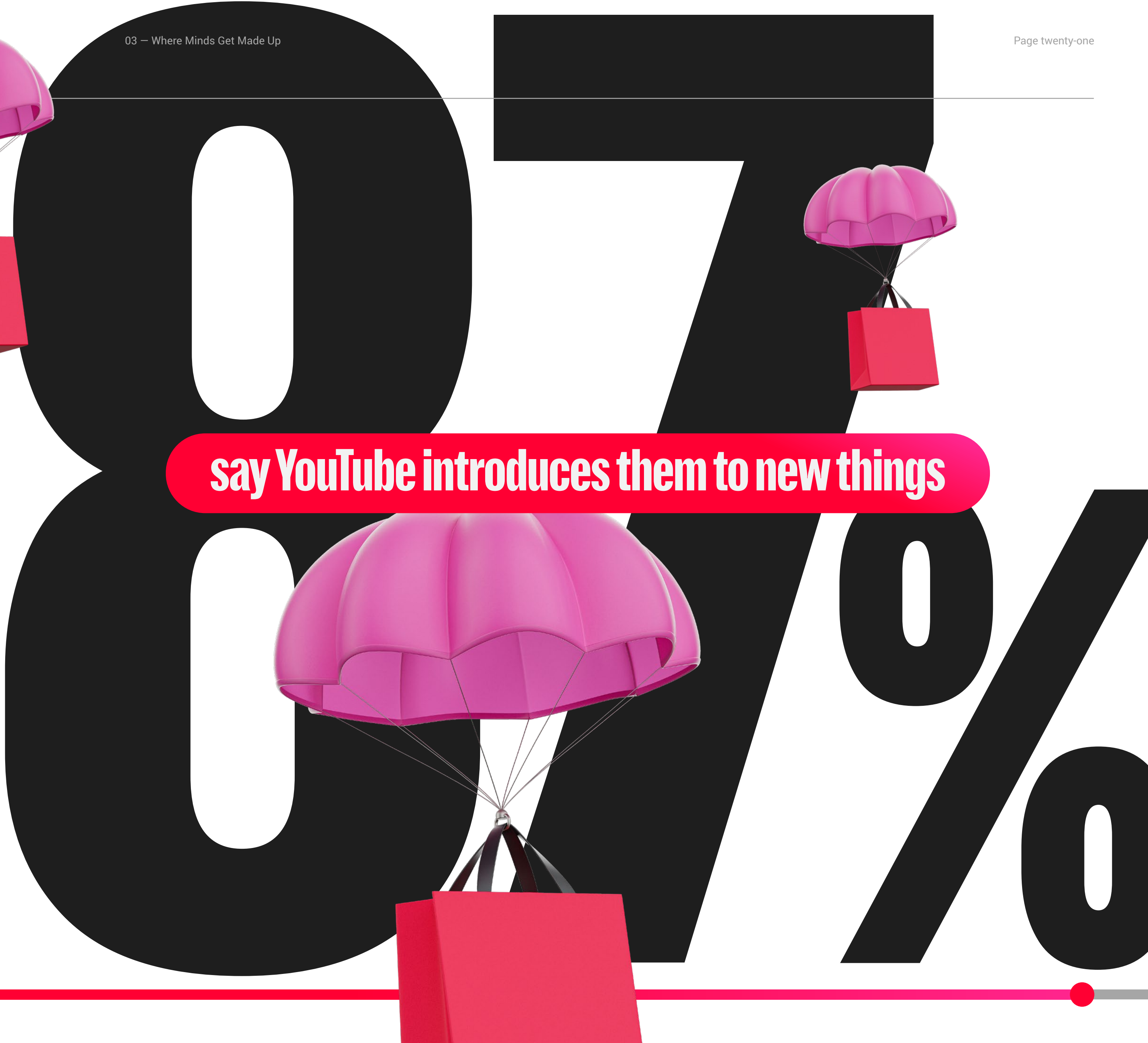
People come to YouTube with intent: to be entertained, to learn, and to decide. Faced with endless choice, they use it to discover something new, then vet the specs and verify the quality before they spend.

to decision



@blndsundoll4mj

YouTube may not be most marketers' idea of a storefront. But increasingly it's exactly where people discover the things they want to buy. It collapses the purchase journey into one place: from awareness (87% say YouTube introduces them to new things) to consideration (90% use it to go deeper on a topic they care about) to the actual purchase decision (66% say that YouTube helps them make more confident shopping decisions).





Case study
Tasked with showing off Jimmy John's new range of sandwiches without it reading like a menu, creator Adam W turned one of the restaurant company's sandwich shops into an absurdist fine-dining experience — a comedy set piece his audience actually wanted to watch. So sandwiches were delivered by gondola and flambéed tableside, and remained front and center without it ever feeling like an ad. Adam W summed up the impact best: **"For a brand deal to get millions of views organically is kind of insane."**



How creator Adam W cooked up a viral hit for Jimmy John's



158%
higher CTR than non-influencer creative

62%
more efficient CPV than non-influencer creative



Watch the full video here



@AdamW

YouTube ranks #1 for both quick purchase decisions and complex ones



Our study shows just how strongly viewers feel about the platform when they're looking to spend.

They rank it #1 for when they want to research, vet, or make a decision about a brand, and #1 for purchases both quick and complex. Whether they're buying a new shade of lipstick or an SUV,

YouTube is where they go to shop.





“ON YOUTUBE, I COULD SEE
SOMEONE HANDLING IT
AND WEARING IT.
THIS MADE ME DECIDE
TO BUY IT”

Surveyed viewer
Male, U.S.

 @Brookemonk

What it means for marketers:

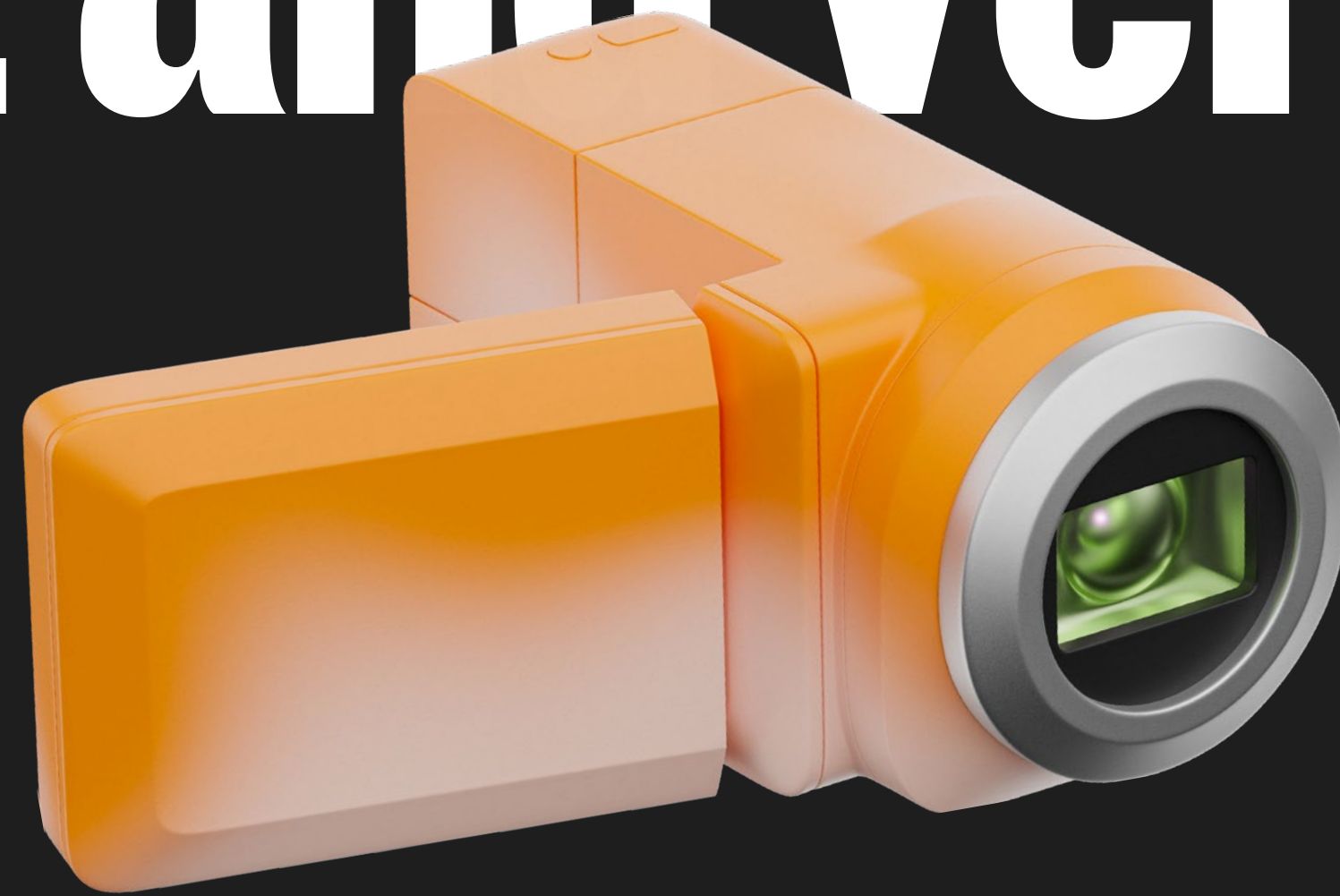
People vet and verify with video

YouTube enables you to create, capture, and convert demand

You no longer have to choose between brand building and driving performance. YouTube combines higher intent with more purposeful viewing — it's where brands break through in culture while selling products. Only YouTube has the breadth of content to match viewers' intent across the entire journey and the tools to easily scale creator partnerships and paid media in one place.

Put your brand inside YouTube's vet-and-verify loop to capture demand and conversion in one place — a place where viewers want to be entertained, discover, and confidently decide.

Layering YouTube's ad solutions on top of organic creator content drives incremental views and increases iROAS by 16%. And combining Video Reach and Video View campaigns with Demand Gen can drive 32% more revenue.



Scale success by layering YouTube paid solutions

Use **Video Reach campaigns** to maximize awareness and scale your message in the moments that matter.

Use **Video View campaigns** to boost consideration and get your story in front of audiences most likely to watch your ad.

Use **Demand Gen** to spark action and connect with audiences when they're most likely to purchase.

The key takeaways

- 1 Drive greater awareness**
through a breadth of short-form and long-form video that only YouTube can deliver
- 2 Build deeper connections**
by partnering with creators that their audiences — your customers — actually trust
- 3 Close the discovery-decision gap**
by showing up where viewers vet, verify, and buy



@Brookemonk

No other video platform does all three; no other serves as the place where the whole journey happens — from first watch to final click.

As marketers and brands, it's time to show up where and how audiences expect you to: with the creators they trust, in the moments they choose.

