

Study: Digital content makes teens feel good about themselves

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There's no question teens love digital stars: They flock to annual conventions such as VidCon, subscribe in mass numbers to YouTube and Vine accounts and even start their own video blogs.

But Defy Media, a digital [content](#) company geared toward millennials, wanted to find out why such platforms resonate more with teens.

In its third annual report, released Tuesday, Defy found a majority (62 percent) of 13-to-24-year-olds flock to online video platforms such as YouTube because digital content makes them feel good about themselves.

"We have a belief that digital is winning with younger people and we wanted to validate that," said Andy Tu, executive vice president of marketing at Defy Media. "Based on what we saw, there's so much evidence that the big reason digital wins isn't just because of technology. It's because the content that's on these platforms is inherently more relatable."

Defy, which partnered with Hunter Qualitative and KnoWhy Research for the report, surveyed roughly 1,350 people nationwide, ages 13 to 24, and interviewed 36 people. About 18 of those interviews were in-person in Los Angeles, Atlanta and Minneapolis. The rest were conducted through online interviews, Skype chats and [social media](#).

Before interviews, Tu said they looked at the social media profiles of the

teenagers (with their permission) to observe their viewing and sharing habits.

According to the report, millennials watch 11.3 hours of free online video and 10.8 hours of subscription online video weekly - nearly twice the time reported for free online TV offerings from broadcast and cable networks (6.4 hours) or for regularly scheduled TV (8.3 hours).

Roughly 69 percent of those surveyed said digital delivers the content they want to watch and to which they can relate (67 percent). By comparison, only 56 percent of the surveyed millennials said TV delivers content they want to watch and less than half (41 percent) said the more traditional platform has content to which they can relate.

"TV is coming from development execs then creators then producers and then talent performs that content," Tu noted. "YouTube has a deeper connection because the content comes from the creator."

Many of those Defy interviewed also said content creators were also more committed than traditional stars.

"They don't miss a single day and they are dedicated to the craft," Tu said. "Their content is consistent so a lot of the people we interviewed said they could count on them."

One person Defy interviewed said though she loved singer Nicki Minaj, it wasn't as easy to form a connection with her as a fan.

Tu said the teenager specifically said: "Nicki Minaj is all about making money and I can't make money so I can't relate to her."

Some of those surveyed consider YouTubers as their role models. An estimated 32 percent of the 13-to-17-year-olds surveyed said they are

more likely to look up to a YouTube personality over a traditional celebrity. In the 18-to-24-year-old category, that number dropped to 26 percent. But 52 percent of that age demographic still said they feel closer to their favorite YouTubers.

When asked if they could be a YouTube star, more than half of those surveyed said yes. However, when asked if they could be a TV or movie star, the figures fell to an average of 40 percent.

YouTube personalities also wield more power than traditional stars when it comes to promoting a brand, the study found. An estimated 63 percent of all respondents said they would try a product or brand recommended by a YouTube personality versus the 48 percent who reported that they would try a product or brand recommended by TV and movie stars.

Just last weekend, Tu said he was walking around the Grove shopping center in Los Angeles when he spotted an event that featured Vine and YouTube stars.

"There were hordes of people waiting everywhere to get selfies with all this talent," he said. "Everyone at the Grove over the age of 30 was looking at each other like 'What the hell is going on around here?' I think people are shocked to see that boy-band-level fanatic behavior around YouTubers and Viners because they have no idea who they are."

But as far as the future goes, Tu is confident that digital will become more mainstream.

"This (millennial) group is only getting older," he said. "They are going to continue carrying these viewing habits and trends as they go along."

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