

Eight Ways to Reach Teens

A U.S. teen's average daily media consumption consists of 200 minutes of television, 52 minutes of computer usage, 6 minutes of mobile voice activity, 96 text messages exchanged, and 25 minutes of console gaming, according to Nielsen. To put this in context, there are 33 million teens aged 10 to 19 in the U.S., according to the census, and teens spend 44 percent of their day on school and homework and 19 percent of their day with media only, according to the Ball State University's September 2007 "[High School Media Too](#)" study. While Morgan Stanley's recent [teen market's media consumption analysis](#) by articulate 15-year-old Matthew Robson caused a stir, his findings are consistent with Nielsen's June 2009 "[How Teens Use Media](#)" report and Experian's "[2009 Digital Marketer: Benchmark and Trend Report](#)."

Five Ways Teen Will Be Teens

Examine Robson's teenage perspective on his peers and their activity, and you'll find five teen behaviors that haven't changed from their boomer and Gen X parents' teen behaviors. Rather, the devices and how teens use them have. These differences have significant impact on how marketers reach teenagers:

- **Teens communicate via phone with their friends.** Today's teens use mobile phones for voice and text communications for privacy to share the details of their lives. Texting allows for asynchronous messages that can be one-to-one or one-to-many. Experian finds that older teens (18-20) use text and e-mail equally. Teens are three times more receptive to mobile advertising, according to 2008 Nielsen research. Following this logic, it's understandable that Twitter, which many users access via mobile devices, doesn't reach teens because it's a more public communication vehicle that doesn't meet teens' needs.

Marketing implications: Add targeted text campaigns to reach teens, and use other mobile marketing formats to attract them.

- **Teens listen to music.** They're the biggest buying segment of recorded music. The exception to this trend was the conversion from records and cassette tapes to CDs in the late 1980s, when product was scarce and expensive. Today's teens are their own DJs, using personal, portable music devices, mobile phones, and computers. Nielsen reports that globally 39 percent of teens listen to music on an MP3 player and 33 percent listen to music on a home computer. Additionally, 75 percent of global teens still listen to some CDs each week.

Marketing implications: Assess potential to provide or sponsor music and/or ringtone downloads. Incorporate music-related marketing, such as tour and live event sponsorships and tie-ins.

- **Teens socialize with their friends, preferably away from adults' prying eyes.** Today's teens use video gaming and Facebook to socialize remotely, where they can control their communications. Experian found that older teens view video games as a social activity.

Marketing implications: Engage teens' base of friends through social bookmarking, forward-to-a-friend, and IM. Distribute samples to teens via their online friends and connections. Consider relevant, integrated product placement opportunities in targeted games.

- **Teens go to movies as a social experience.** Historically, the teen movie-going audience is a major determinant of box office success. Teens see an average of 10.8 movies per year, based on Nielsen's findings.

Marketing implications: Assess potential for product placement within movies and outtakes. Remember, this placement's reach continues via other screening opportunities, such as DVDs and television. Use video outtakes to sell movies and related products. Test sampling consumer products at teen-oriented movie showings. Use DVD packages for related and targeted marketing, such as package inserts.

- **Teens tend to have limited access to money.** As a result, they seek free and cheap alternatives. They tend to spend their money on clothes, good looks, and entertainment. Teens are known for finding loopholes to get free products and to share content, music, and software. Therefore, it's no surprise that they don't want to pay for content such as newspapers and music.

Marketing implication: Consider the pricing impact of teen-related offerings.

Three Ways Teens Are Like the Rest of Us

While teenagers don't want to hear that they act just like their parents, here are three insights that hold for both groups:

- **Teens don't like intrusive ads.** Who does? Most media consumers find ways to avoid seeing, reading, or hearing ads on- and offline. That said, Nielsen found that once advertisers broke through and got teens' attention, they were 44 percent more likely than older viewers to "like" the TV ad spots.

Marketing implication: Ensure that advertising targeted at teens relates to their specific needs and interests. Use creative to make advertising break through.

- **Teens find news important but don't want to pay for it.** In addition to free online content, nearly 30 percent of 18 to 20 year olds read newspapers on an average day and 34 percent read newspapers on an average Sunday, according to Scarborough Research, most likely because the papers are already in the house. Similarly, adults prefer not paying for most content and print newspaper circulation is declining.

Marketing implications: Consider ways to offer news content to reach a teen market to build your brand for the long term while meeting teens' financial constraints. For example, offer school subscriptions or integrate your content with a textbook publisher.

- **Teens have distinct work (i.e., school) and social (i.e., home) computer consumption habits.** Contrary to popular belief, 77 percent of the time observed teens consumed one medium at a time, making them more focused in their usage than older segments, according Ball State University.

Marketing implication: Assess where and how teens will use your Web site or media placement. Let this influence how you present your marketing message. The more things change, the more they stay the same. Teens may not want to hear it, even if they act a lot like their parents did or currently do. For marketers, what matters most is engaging the teen demographic and building trust so that you'll have a customer for life.