



## ARTICLE

# Travel Content Takes Off on YouTube

## THE **RUNDOWN**

What do Kobe Bryant, Disneyland and WestJet Airlines have in common? They're all featured in some of YouTube's most-viewed travel videos. In recent years, online video has proven to be a powerful channel for information, education and entertainment, particularly in the travel and hospitality industry, where we've seen impressive growth. According to a recent study Google conducted with Ipsos MediaCT, two out of three U.S. consumers watch online travel videos when they're thinking about taking a trip. What exactly are travelers looking for? What's popular? What content are they watching? Here's what we found.

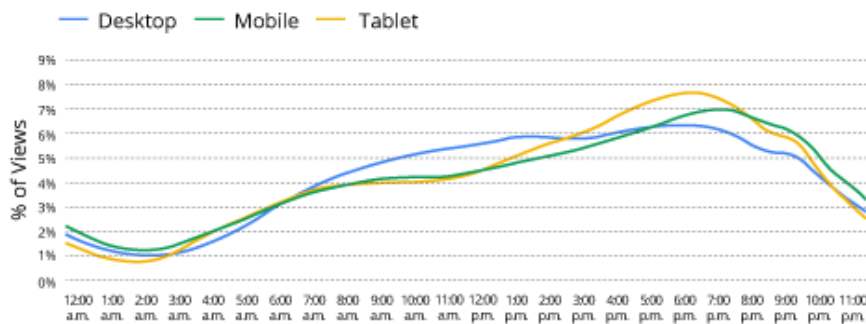
Travel content has proliferated as people around the world share their experiences and seek inspiration for their next adventure. Every month, more than one billion people visit YouTube to watch more than six billion hours of video, making YouTube an ideal place to explore how travelers interact with video content.<sup>1</sup> According to a recent study Google conducted with Ipsos MediaCT, two out of three U.S. consumers watch online travel videos when they're thinking about taking a trip.<sup>2</sup> But what are travelers looking for? What's popular? What content are they watching? To find out, we analyzed aggregated and anonymized views of travel content on YouTube in the U.S. from early 2012 to early 2014. For the purposes of this research, we define "travelers" as those individuals who engage with or search for travel content on Google.com and/or YouTube. Overall, our findings have big implications for marketers looking to connect with travelers, regardless of category.

### **Videos influence travel decisions**

YouTube data shows that travelers are spending more time watching online videos than ever before, with views of travel-related content up 118% year over year (YoY). According to the data, travelers are increasingly using mobile devices to consume travel-related videos anytime and anywhere; in 2013, mobile devices accounted for roughly 30% of all travel video views, with mobile viewing up 97% on smartphones and 205% on tablets, YoY.<sup>3</sup>

Across devices—desktop and mobile—travelers are consuming travel-related videos around the clock. Nearly half are viewed during prime time (3:00–10:00 p.m. PST).<sup>4</sup> While desktop users tend to watch videos throughout the day, smartphone and tablet users tend to tune in during the evening hours.

### Travel Category Views on YouTube by Device (in PST)

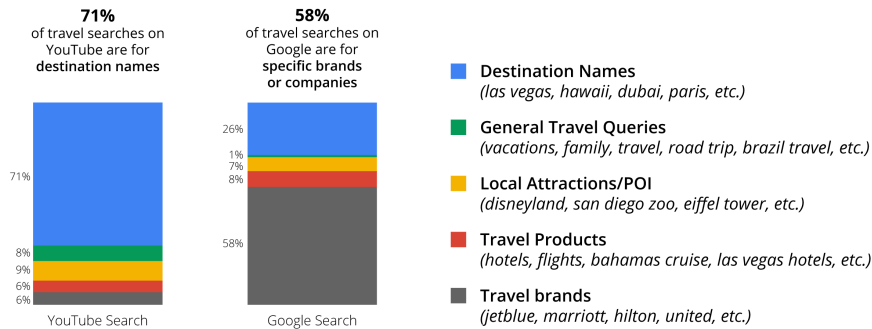


Source: YouTube Data, 2014, United States.

What's piquing their interest? Eighty-eight percent of YouTube travel searches focus on destinations, attractions/points of interest or general travel ideas.<sup>5</sup>

Much like the seasonality we see in the industry overall, travel search activity on YouTube peaks in July, with smaller spikes in March and October. While a large percentage of Google.com travel searches are brand specific and based on purchase-intent activity, searches on YouTube generally occur earlier in the travel-planning process.

### Top 1,000 Travel Queries

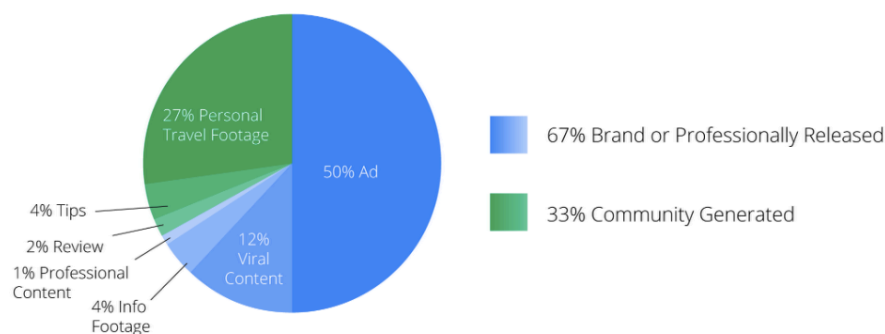


Source: Google Data, March 2013–March 2014, Search Query Volume, United States.

## Compelling content grabs travelers' attention

While travel watchers on YouTube are interested in community-generated content, the majority of travel-related views (67%) are for brand or professionally released videos. In fact, views of branded videos are up 394% YoY, and we see companies with a strong brand presence, such as Turkish Airlines, Disney Parks & Resorts and Expedia, making the most of this opportunity.<sup>6</sup>

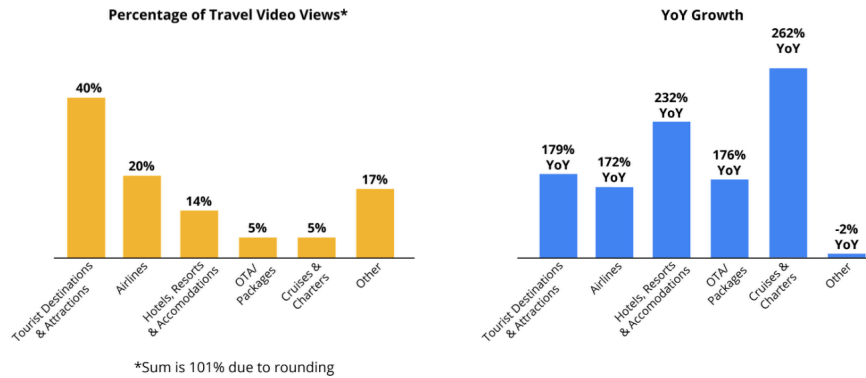
## Travel Video Views by Content Type



Source: YouTube Data, 2012 and 2013, United States.

Viewership across travel categories increased significantly YoY. While most are tuning in to watch videos about tourist destinations and attractions (40% of the total travel views), the largest growth can be seen in the cruises and charters category, up an impressive 262%.<sup>7</sup> This rise is due, in large part, to an increase in videos from companies such as Carnival Cruise Lines, Viking River Cruises and Princess Cruises.

## Primary Categories of Travel Videos on YouTube



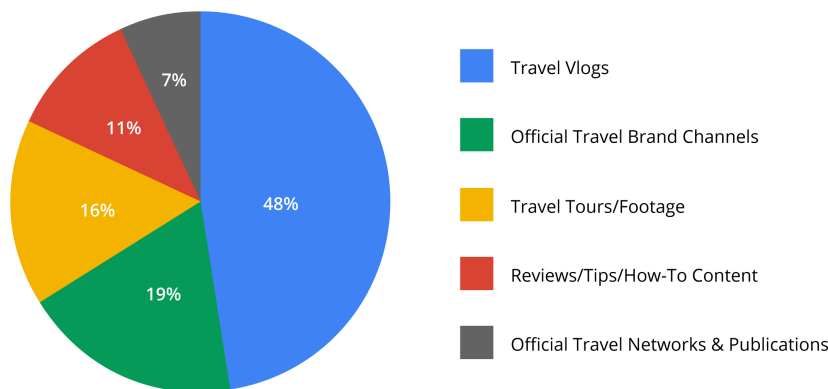
Source: YouTube Data, 2012 and 2013, United States.

## Travelers are looking to sustain a connection

Travelers want to do more than just watch videos on YouTube; they want to connect with creators and brands. In 2014 year to date, subscriptions to top travel channels on YouTube have increased 106% YoY.<sup>8</sup> And these subscribers watch 86% longer per view than nonsubscribers do.<sup>9</sup>

They're also extremely interested in hearing real-life stories. Nearly half of the travel subscriptions are to vlogs (video blogs) that feature personal travel experiences.

## Percent of Travel Channel Subscriptions by Format



Source: YouTube Data, March 2014, United States.

Travel vlogs, in fact, receive 4x more social engagement (likes, comments, shares, favorites and subscriptions) than other types of travel content on YouTube.<sup>10</sup> Travelers tend to find them more engaging on a per-view basis.

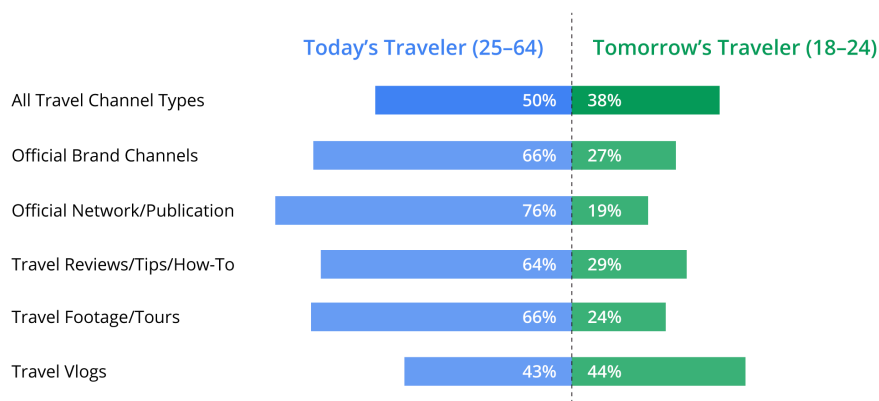
## Content Travelers Are Most Likely to Engage With:

1. Travel vlogs
2. Official travel networks & publications
3. Reviews/tips/how-to content
4. Travel tours/footage
5. Official travel brands

People of all ages subscribe to YouTube travel content. Fifty percent of travel channel subscribers are aged 25 to 64, while 38% fall in the 18 to 24 age range.<sup>11</sup> The younger audience tends to favor travel vlogs, suggesting they have more of an interest in “authentic” content. Perhaps they’re living vicariously through their fellow YouTubers, or, at the very least, getting inspired to travel.

The 25-to-64-year-olds seem to be interested in a broader range of content relevant to frequent travelers. Often these are videos associated with decisions further down the travel purchase path, such as brand information, reviews and tips.

### Travel Channel Subscribers by Age Group



Source: YouTube Data, March 2014, United States.

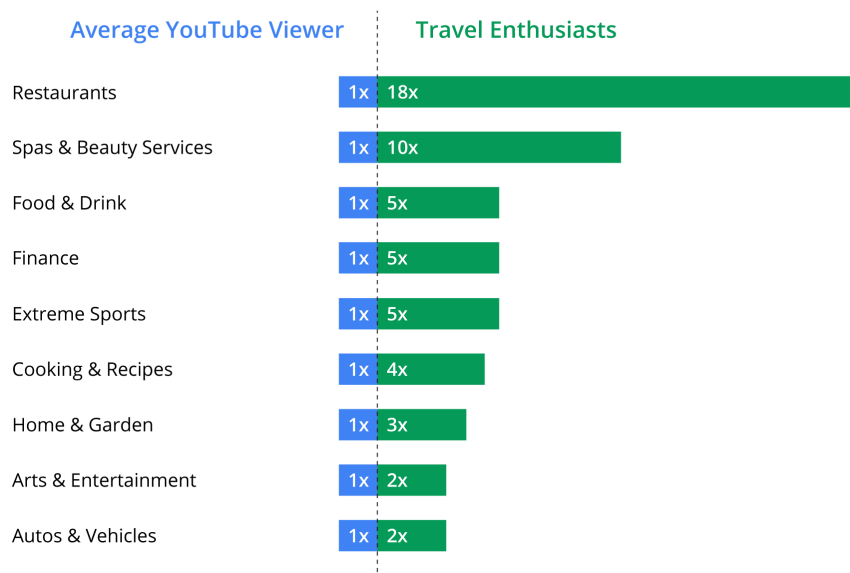
### Going beyond travel content

It's not all about travel for these YouTube visitors, though. Three in four come to watch videos related to their interests, hobbies or particular

topic.<sup>12</sup> Travelers often watch content in categories closely related to travel, such as restaurants, spas and food and drink. Compared with the average YouTube user, travelers are 18x more likely to watch videos about restaurants, for example.<sup>13</sup>

As we can see from the chart below, they're also interested in viewing videos about categories tangential to travel such as finance, extreme sports, home and garden, and autos and vehicles. Interestingly, they're less likely to engage with content about computer and video games, comics and animation, and hair care.

### Likelihood of Watching Videos in Other Categories



Source: YouTube Data, March 2014, United States.

### Travel videos drive brand buzz

Viral videos aren't just for the twerkers, laughing babies and anything animal related (for those "aww" moments). There's virality in the travel category as well. That's because travelers, like any other YouTube users, enjoy sharing their favorite videos with friends and family.

Looking at travel videos that have gone viral (defined as content created to drive buzz that's not overly transactional and generated 500,000 views or more), we can see that airline companies account for most of the views (76%).<sup>14</sup> Turkish Airlines' "[Kobe vs. Messi](#)" series, Virgin America's "[#VXSafetyDance](#)" and WestJet's "[Christmas Miracle: Real Time Giving](#)" are great examples of videos that are engaging, fun and, at times, touching.

Airlines have embraced video as a powerful differentiation tool, one that allows their brands to stand out and be creative with a range of topics.

Nineteen percent of viral video views come from destinations, which include brands such as Disney Parks & Resorts. Two standout examples from Disney Parks are "[Grumpy Cat Finds Her Disney Side](#)" and "[Disneyland Musical Marriage Proposal](#)."

While a viral video can rack up millions of views (if you're lucky), views are just one measure of a video's success. Shares, subscribers gained and other online actions are important as well.

### Implications for marketers

Across industries, advertisers are increasingly embracing online video to drive awareness and engagement, and this trend is only expected to accelerate. For travel advertisers, online video is a powerful way to convey excitement about a destination, product, service or brand. From 2012 to 2013, uploads of travel-related videos (both brand/professionally released and community generated) grew by 190%, and growth in travel video uploads overall outpace those of other major categories on YouTube.<sup>15</sup>

Here are a couple of brands that have recently embraced the video opportunity and found success:

#### CASE STUDY

##### Visit California Inspires Travelers Around the World

In February 2014, Visit California launched an inventive initiative on YouTube to promote its new campaign, The Dream 365 Project, taking over the YouTube homepage masthead position in the U.S., U.K., Australia and Canada. For 24 hours, it featured a different video every hour. Clicking on the ad took visitors to the Visit California brand channel where they could continue to engage with content. The effort successfully drove awareness, with a 7% increase in trip consideration and a 17% rise in likelihood to visit among the exposed audience. There were over 22,270 hours, or 2.5 years, of branded interaction time.

See a case study on Visit California's inventive use of video in its campaign. [▶](#)

**CASE STUDY****Hyatt Brings Its Brand Experience to Life**

Hyatt Hotels Corporation, a global leader in hospitality for more than 50 years, wanted to highlight its hotels' improvements, specifically to female business travelers. To do so, it turned to Lightbox Ads. Taking advantage of the format's creative canvas, Hyatt brought its brand to life in a full-screen rich media experience. Hyatt also ran YouTube TrueView video ads to expand the reach of its Lightbox Ads. The result: It drove interest among its target audience across the web, touching 17 million users and receiving half a million engagements.

See a case study on how Hyatt Hotels Corporation embraced video and found success. ►

**Key findings**

Our research revealed that travelers:

- spend more time than ever watching videos on YouTube
- use YouTube as a primary source for travel inspiration
- watch travel videos across devices
- view content across all of YouTube's travel categories
- ages 18 to 24 subscribe to content focused on inspiration for future travel (video blogs)
- ages 25 to 64 subscribe to content to help them plan current travel (reviews, travel brands and travel networks)
- watch video content in other categories during travel research (restaurants, spas and beauty services, finance, extreme sports, and cooking and recipes)

**The bottom line**

As digital video becomes an even bigger part of the traveler's journey, it's increasingly important for advertisers to seize the opportunity. A strong video strategy can help brands reach, inspire and engage today's digitally

savvy traveler in more ways than ever before.

## Sources

- <sup>1</sup> “Statistics.” YouTube. n.d. Web. 9 July 2014.
- <sup>2</sup> Google/Ipsos MediaCT, “The 2014 Traveler’s Road to Decision,” June 2014.
- <sup>3</sup> YouTube Data, 2012 and 2013.
- <sup>4</sup> YouTube Data, 2014.
- <sup>5</sup> Google Data, March 2013–March 2014.
- <sup>6</sup> YouTube Data, 2012 and 2013.
- <sup>7</sup> YouTube Data, 2012 and 2013.
- <sup>8</sup> YouTube Data, 2013 and 2014.
- <sup>9</sup> YouTube Data, 2013.
- <sup>10</sup> YouTube Data, May 2014.
- <sup>11</sup> YouTube Data, May 2014.
- <sup>12</sup> Google/Ipsos MediaCT, “The 2014 Traveler’s Road to Decision,” June 2014.
- <sup>13</sup> YouTube Data, March 2014.
- <sup>14</sup> YouTube Data, 2013 and 2014.
- <sup>15</sup> YouTube Data, 2012 and 2013.



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