

A hand with pink nail polish holds a silver smartphone over a laptop keyboard. The background is a blurred office setting.

THE PERSONALIZATION IMPERATIVE FOR CONTENT MARKETING

1,500 U.S. CONSUMERS' ATTITUDES,
PREFERENCES AND EXPECTATIONS FOR
CONTENT MARKETING PERSONALIZATION

DECEMBER 2016



**MARKETING
INSIDER
GROUP**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CONTENT MARKETING HAS TAKEN the digital marketing world by storm. With barriers to content creation and brand publishing still crashing down around us, there's now more branded content than ever, creating an overwhelming amount of choice and variety for consumers. How are consumers dealing with the avalanche of content and what do they expect of the brands publishing it?

Based on responses from 1,500 U.S. consumers, this research seeks to understand how consumers perceive the purpose and usefulness of branded content and the extent to which personalization factors into that value equation. Do consumers feel that marketers are delivering on their expectations for personally relevant digital content experiences that have been set by Internet leaders like Amazon, Google, Netflix and others? And what's at stake in not excelling at personalization, specifically as it relates to content marketing?

Several notable themes emerged from our findings, but following are the key takeaways:



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Brands risk alienating consumers by not making content personally relevant.

- Nearly half (45%) of consumers won't spend time with branded content if it's not relevant to their interests.
- Forty-two percent (42%) of consumers are less interested in a brand's products and services if the content the brand provides is not personally relevant.
- More than half (51%) of millennial consumers (age 18 to 34) are less interested in a brand's products and services if the brand's content isn't personally relevant.

Consumers are more inclined to purchase and pay more for products from brands that personalize content marketing.

- Eighty-eight percent (88%) of consumers say that personally relevant content improves how they feel about a brand.
- Seventy-eight percent (78%) say that personally relevant content increases their purchase intent for a brand's products and services.

- Fifty percent (50%) say that they would pay more for products and services from brands who do a good job of providing personally relevant content.

Not all digital channels are created equal when it comes to content discovery; Facebook stands above the others.

- Half (50%) of consumers surveyed cited Facebook as a primary discovery channel for branded content.
- Email and Search tied for the second top discovery channel at 29%.
- Millennial respondents (age 18 to 34) cited YouTube (42%) as a primary channel for branded content discovery.

Amazon sets the gold standard in providing a personalized digital experience followed by Google and Facebook.

- At a significant margin, 55% of consumers indicated that Amazon sets the standard for delivering personalized digital experiences followed by Google (39%) and Facebook (38%).

Consumers place the most value on content that informs and educates them.

- Consumers find content that "informs" (40%) and "educates" (28%) to be the most valuable. Only 17% say content that "entertains" is the most valuable and 11% say content that "inspires" is the most valuable.
- Eighty-one percent (81%) of consumers say that content "quality" is somewhat or very important, and 78% of consumers say that "relevance" is somewhat or very important.
- When citing the most important categories for personally relevant content, consumers ranked Health and Wellness at the top with 72%, followed closely by Food (71%) and Electronics and Technology (66%).

The full analysis follows, putting into perspective the mindset, motivations and stages of maturity relative to content marketing.

FOREWORD

Marketers Can No Longer Afford to Defer Personalization

BY MICHAEL BRENNER, CEO AND FOUNDER,
MARKETING INSIDER GROUP

TODAY'S BUYERS AND CONSUMERS ARE fully in control of their customer journey and online experiences.

With the proliferation of content marketing and branded content platforms, the challenge for marketers has shifted from how to create the content their audience actually wants to read and share, to how to break through the



Michael Brenner
CEO and Founder,
Marketing Insider Group

digital and social noise. And reach customers where they consume content, in the way they want, and targeted directly to their needs.

Companies like Amazon present us with personalized content experiences “Related to,” and “Inspired by” the items you viewed. And “Recommended for you” based on your shopping history.

Netflix recommends shows you might like based on your previous viewing habits. Google “auto-fills” suggestions based on searches you’ve previously made. Facebook tailors your news feed based on the items you’ve engaged with.

Maybe you have even landed on a corporate website that tells you the current forecast for your location, or presents a content suggestion based on the IP address of your company.

These examples have served to **increase the expectations** from consumers and buyers who block online ads, fast-forward TV commercials

or “cut the cord” completely on their cable subscription.

Attention has become the currency of the digital, social and mobile web. And the only way to attract a customer’s attention today is through the production of high-quality content that is **relevant and personalized** to the reader.

Marketers have fully embraced the goal of content marketing: to attract an audience with quality content vs. buying or interrupting them with ads and offers that are not relevant to them. Now, more than ever before, marketers are tackling the challenge of **personalizing the content experience**.

Quality and relevance are the goals of the online content consumer. Personalization is the only way to achieve this goal and gain the attention of your potential customers.

(Continued)

FOREWORD

PERSONALIZING THE CONTENT EXPERIENCE

As you'll see in the research following, nearly half of consumers won't engage with a brand that doesn't provide content mapped to their interests and needs. And more than three-quarter of consumers see personally relevant content as the key to engaging more deeply with a brand and considering the products and services they provide.

With the average consumer engaging in multiple content touch points, personalized content is not the goal. But rather the goal for marketers is to deliver **personalized content experiences**.

Email, search and social continue to dominate the content landscape, as a majority of consumers cited these channels as the ones they use most to discover the content that is relevant to them.

Marketers must create the right content, for the right person, on the right channel, at the right time, in order to deliver a truly personalized content experience.

So if you are still spending the majority of your marketing dollars on ad campaigns or promotional messages, and not on creating personally relevant content experiences, you are missing out on the large majority of content being consumed and shared online. And you are missing the opportunity to build your brand's awareness and your product's purchase intent.

Your audience has many choices today. They choose the topics that are interesting to them, the types of content they want to consume, the formats they prefer and the channels they use.



Marketers need to move beyond just creating quality content. They need to build personalized content experiences across the customer journey.

This marketing mandate has enormous implications on the way we build and evolve brand-owned digital websites, and how we distribute content across email and social platforms, on the technology we use, on the content we create, and on the data we aggregate in order to build the kind of customer insights required to deliver on the dream of personalization.

So what are you waiting for?

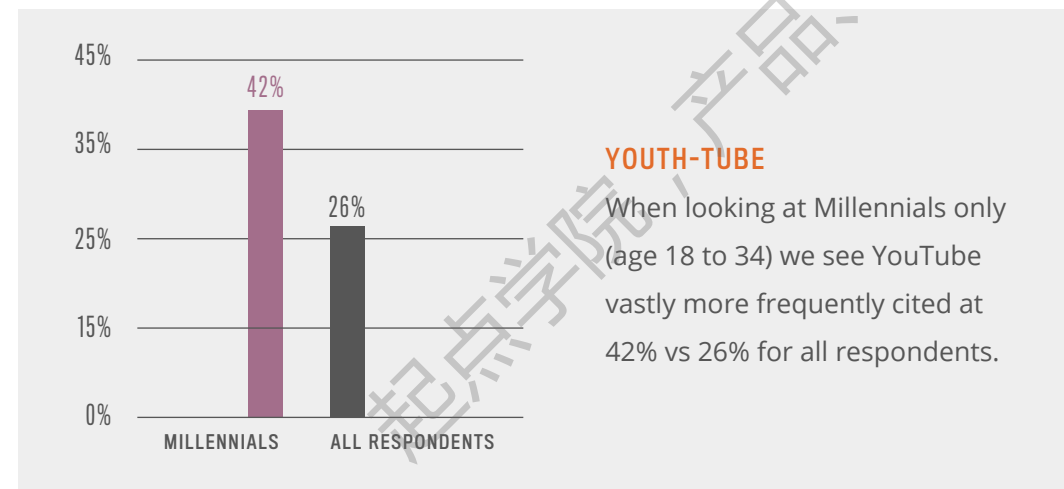
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How do consumers
discover, perceive
and engage with
branded content?

THE DISCOVERY CHANNELS

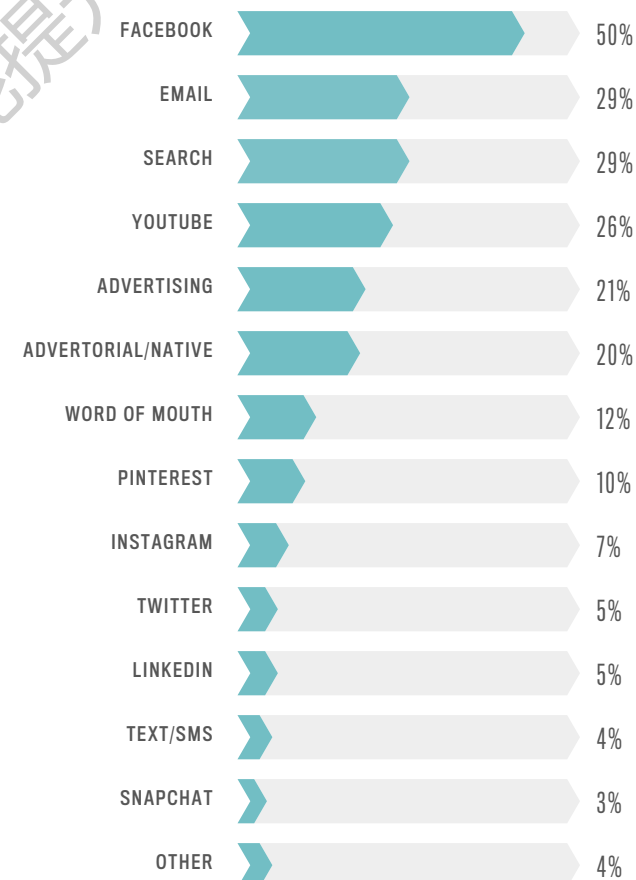
Half of consumers say they discover branded content via Facebook. Email, online search and YouTube also play an important role in branded content discovery.

When asked to choose the top three channels where they come across branded content, 50% of respondents cite Facebook, with a significant margin over the other sources. Email and online search are cited by 29% each, with YouTube following closely behind at 26%. Advertising and advertorial/native placements earn 21% and 20% respectively, followed by a long tail of less frequently cited sources.



TOP CHANNELS FOR DISCOVERING BRANDED CONTENT

Respondents were asked to choose their top three companies

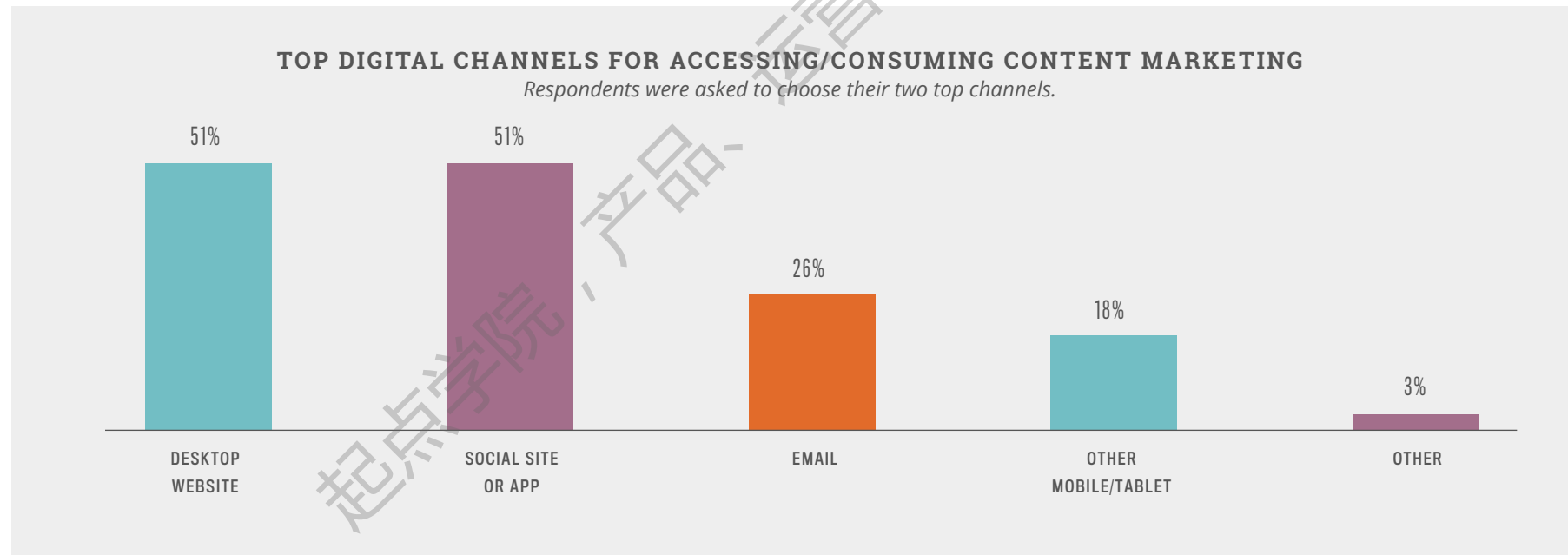


CONSUMPTION JUNCTION

When consuming content, it's not just about desktop websites. Social sites and apps comprise a critical channel where consumers access branded content.

When asked to identify the top two channels where they access branded content, consumers indicated evenly websites (51%) and social media sites/apps (51%). More than a quarter (26%)

identified email. Other mobile/tablet apps were less popular at 18%, perhaps due to less penetration of content promotion capabilities within those products. 3% identified other.



MORE THAN

2/3

OF CONSUMERS SAY THAT CONTENT
MARKETING IS AT ITS BEST WHEN IT

EDUCATES OR
INFORMS THEM.

CONTENT USE CASES

When it comes to content marketing, most consumers place greater value on UTILITY over entertainment.

When asked about the best thing content marketing does for them, consumers indicate far and away that they find content that Informs to be the most valuable (40%). Right behind that role is Education at 28%, showing that knowledge is power in content marketing. Only 17% say that Entertainment is most valuable, and a scant 11% put Inspiration at the top of the use cases. These splits show that more than two thirds of consumers place greater value on content that enriches the brain versus just stimulating it.

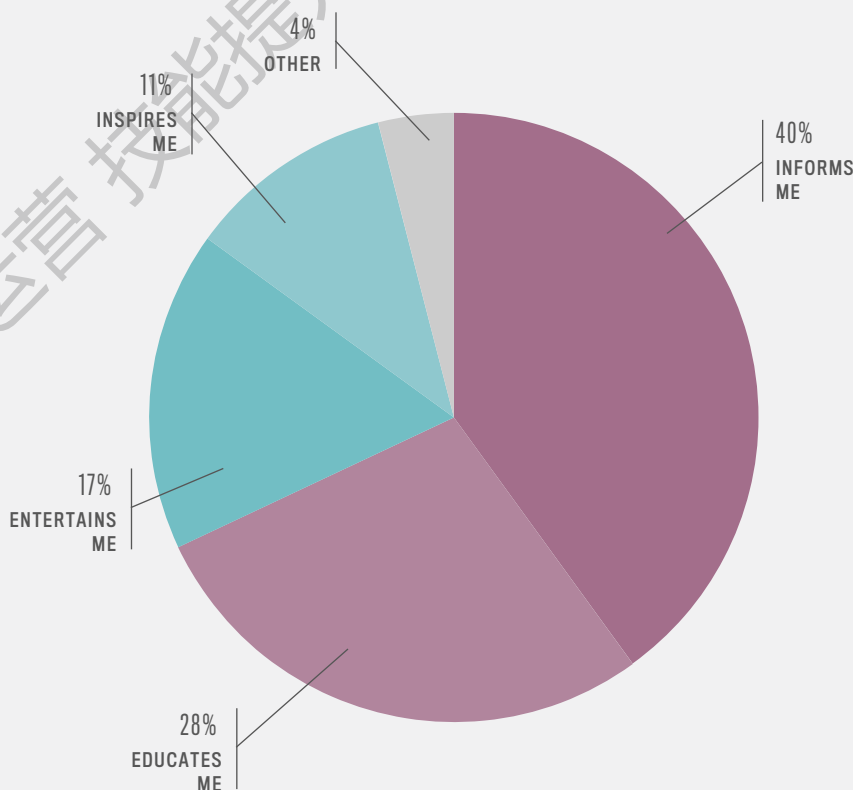
IN THEIR WORDS



I really like how-to videos. Showing common and unusual uses for a brand gets me thinking about how I might be able to solve one of my own problems with the brand."

—SURVEY RESPONDENT

TOP CONSUMER USE CASES FOR BRANDED CONTENT



WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT IN CONTENT

Quality and Relevance are most important in judging branded content's value.

While consumers find several factors to be important in judging the value of branded content, Quality and Relevance are the top two they indicated are somewhat or very important. 81% of consumers indicate that Quality is somewhat or very important, while 78% of consumers indicate relevance is somewhat or very important. Channel ("available where I need it") is also deemed somewhat or very important (77%), with other factors like visual attractiveness and familiarity with the brand trailing behind.

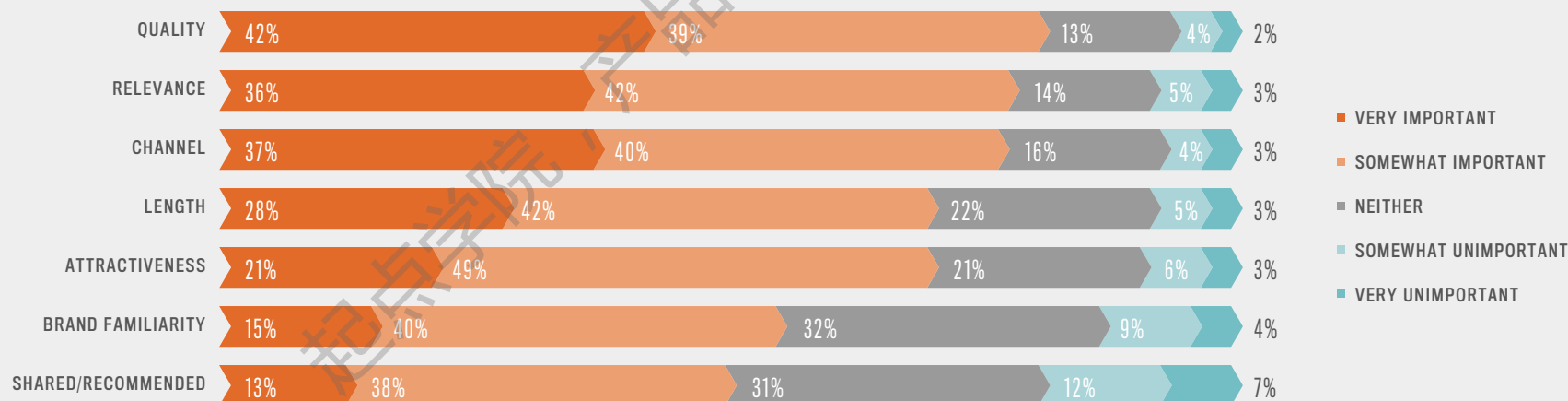
IN THEIR WORDS



If your content doesn't grab me as relevant IMMEDIATELY, you have no hope. I wish I had a nickel for every video that I've only seen four seconds of, or every article that I've never read past the headline."

—SURVEY RESPONDENT

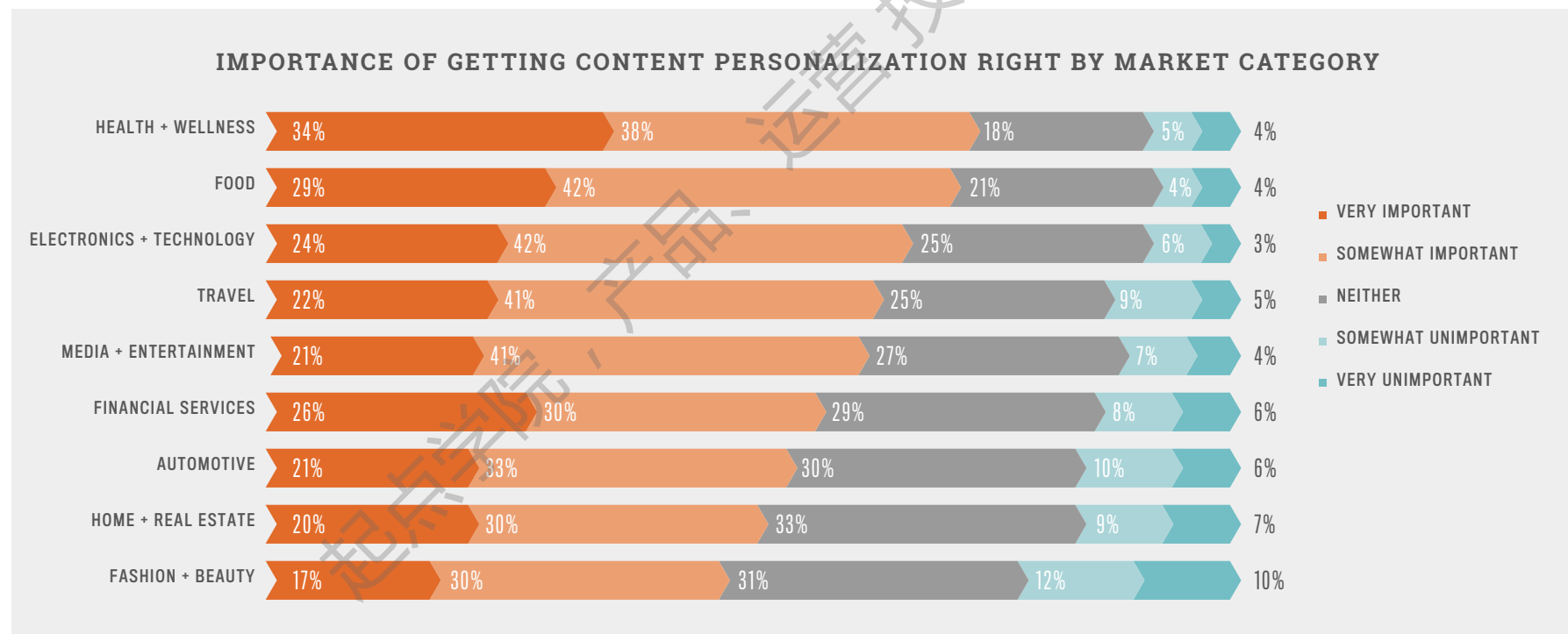
IMPORTANCE OF CHARACTERISTICS OF BRANDED CONTENT



CRITICAL CATEGORIES

Health and Wellness, Food and Electronics/Tech are most often cited by consumers as the categories where getting content personalization right is important.

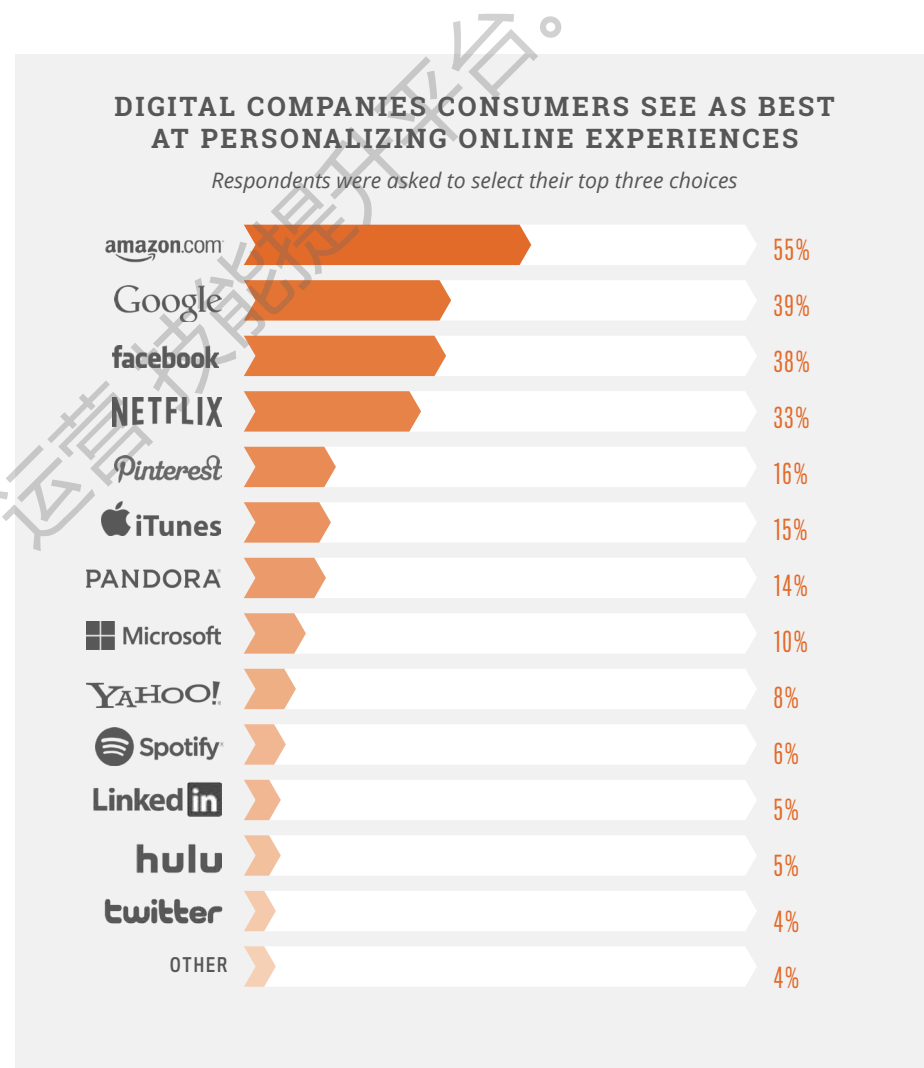
When asked about the importance of personally relevant content by category, Health and Wellness tops the list with 72% of consumers indicating that personally relevant content is somewhat or extremely important. Seventy one percent (71%) indicated Food and 66% indicated Electronics and Technology as important categories for content personalization. Financial Services also stands out since 26% of consumers indicate that it's extremely important to deliver personally relevant content for that category.



THE STANDARD BEARERS

Amazon leads the pack as the digital company who consumers feel does the best job in creating a personally relevant digital experience.

Consumer expectations for how personally relevant their online experiences should be are influenced greatly by the digital companies and platforms they spend time and attention with. When asked to choose the three companies that are best at being personally relevant, Amazon leads the list by a wide margin, with 55% of people citing them as a leader. Google and Facebook also score high marks with 39% and 38% respectively, with Netflix following closely behind at 33%. We then see a significant drop-off with Pinterest, Apple, Pandora and others moving into the “tail” of the group.



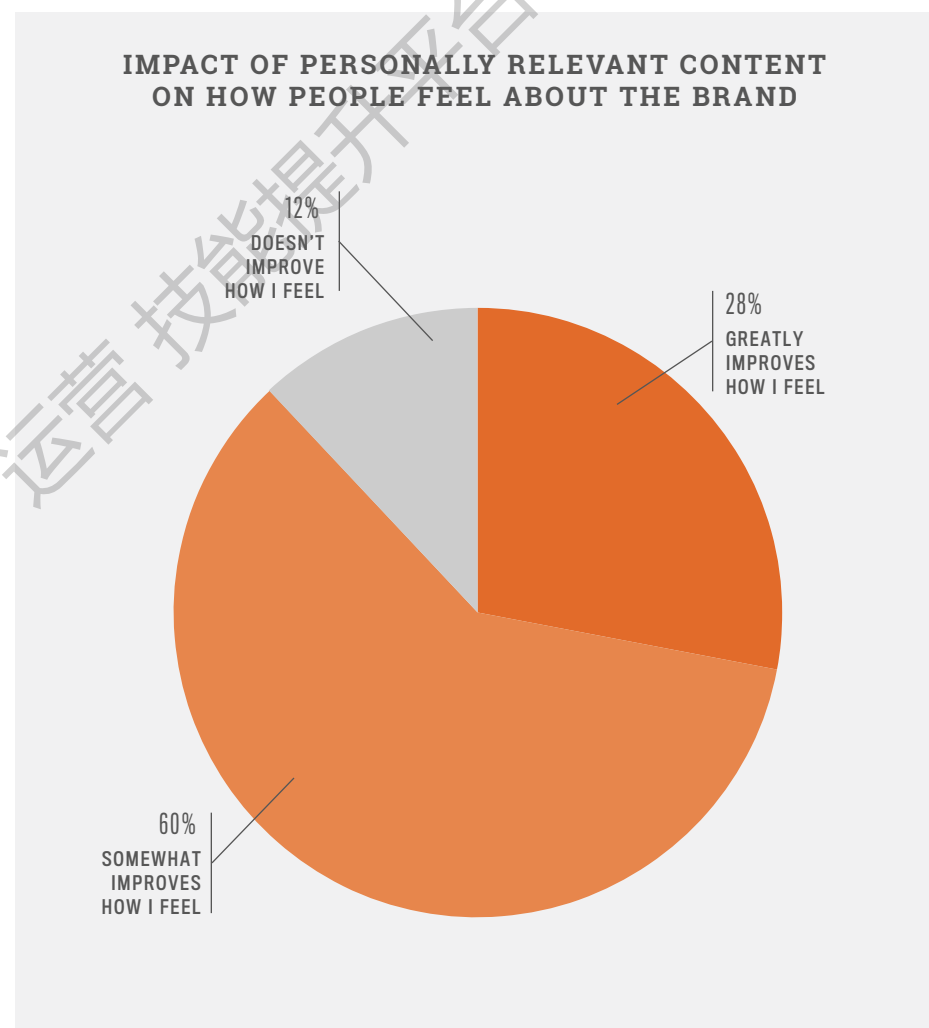


How does personally
relevant content from
brands influence what
consumers think, feel
and do in response?

FEELING TOWARDS THE BRAND

Eighty-eight percent of consumers say that personally relevant branded content positively influences how they feel about the brand.

Sixty percent (60%) of consumers indicate that if a brand does a good job of providing personally relevant content, it somewhat improves how they feel about that brand. Another 28% say that it greatly improves how they feel about the brand, while only 13% say that personally relevant content doesn't improve how they feel.



FEELING TOWARDS THE BRAND

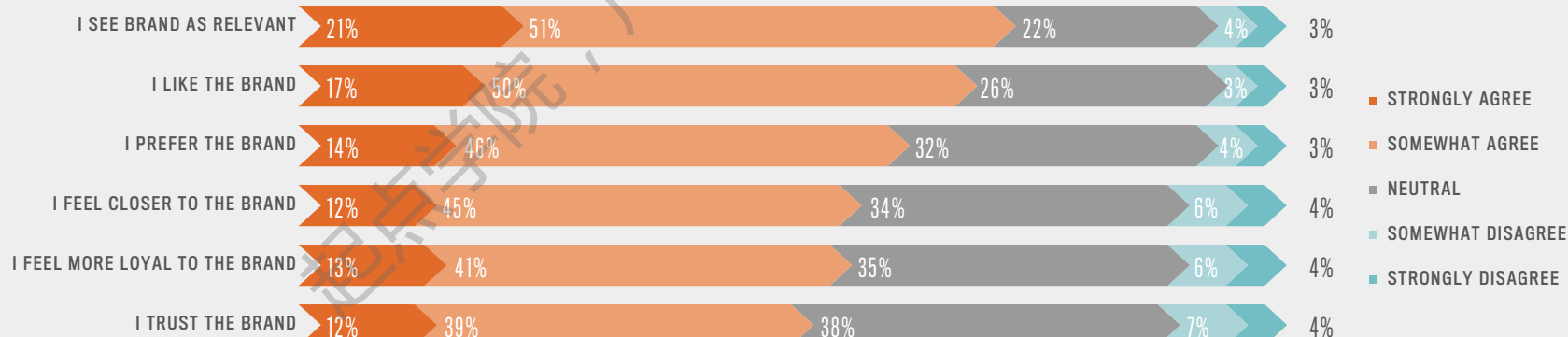
Seventy-two percent of consumers say that when a brand does a great job of delivering personally relevant content, they see the brand itself as relevant.

Nearly three quarters (72%) of consumers see brands as relevant if they do a great job of delivering personally relevant content. Sixty-seven percent (67%) of consumers draw a positive connection between content relevance and brand likability, and 60% of consumers feel a stronger connection with the brand as a result of content relevance.

MOVING MOMS' MINDS

When we look at how Moms compare to the general audience, we see that they are significantly more likely to both trust and feel more connected to brands (by 9 and 10 points respectively) when brands do a great job of delivering personally relevant content.

FEELINGS TOWARD BRANDS WHEN THEY PROVIDE PERSONALLY RELEVANT CONTENT

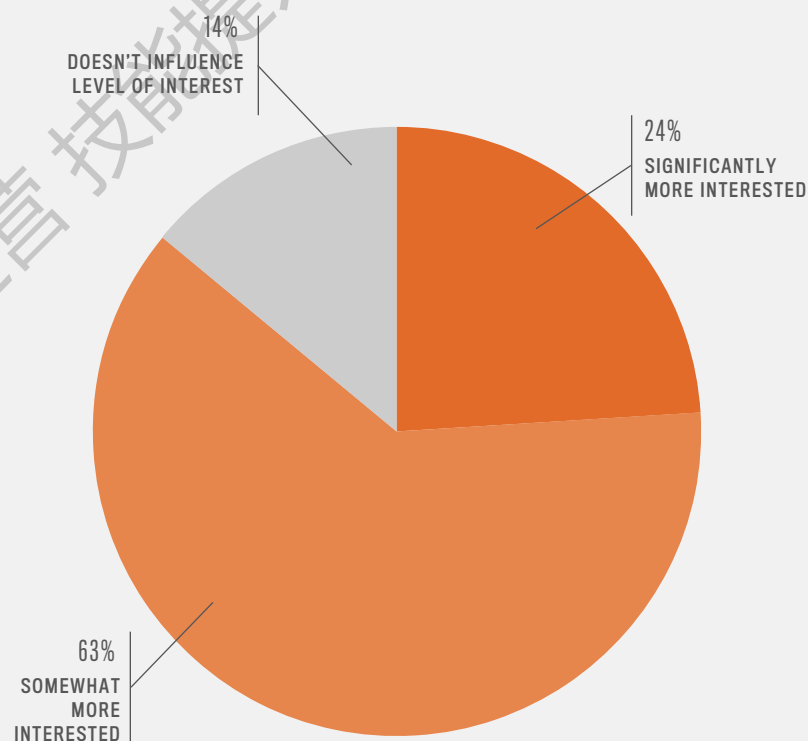


INTEREST IN PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

Eighty-six percent of consumers say that personally relevant content makes them more interested in the brand's products and services.

Eighty-six percent (86%) of consumers indicate that if a brand does a good job of providing personally relevant content, it makes them more interested in that brand's products and services. Sixty-three percent (63%) say they're somewhat more interested, 24% say they're significantly more interested, and 14% say their level of interest is unaffected.

IMPACT OF PERSONALLY RELEVANT CONTENT
ON INTEREST IN PRODUCTS AND SERVICES



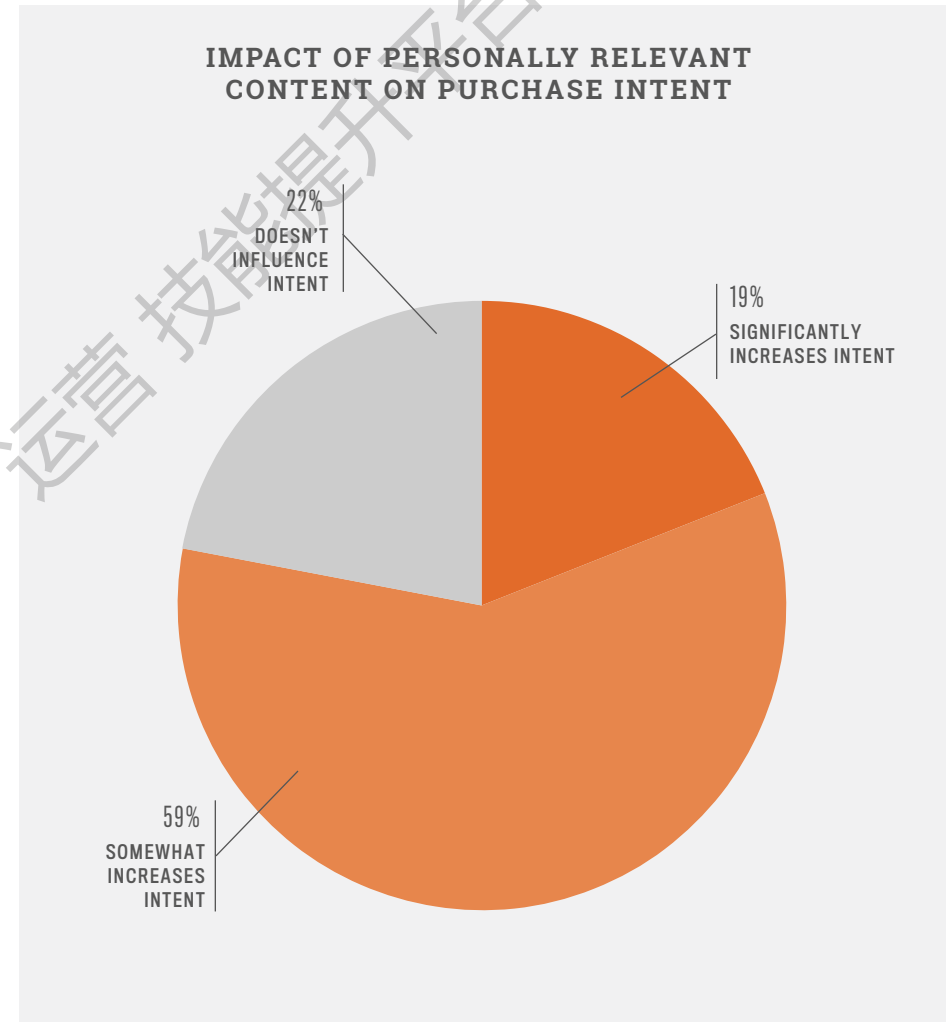
78%

OF CONSUMERS SAY THAT
PERSONALLY RELEVANT CONTENT
INCREASES THEIR PURCHASE INTENT.

PURCHASE INTENT

Seventy-eight percent of consumers say that personally relevant content increases their intent to purchase the brand's products or services.

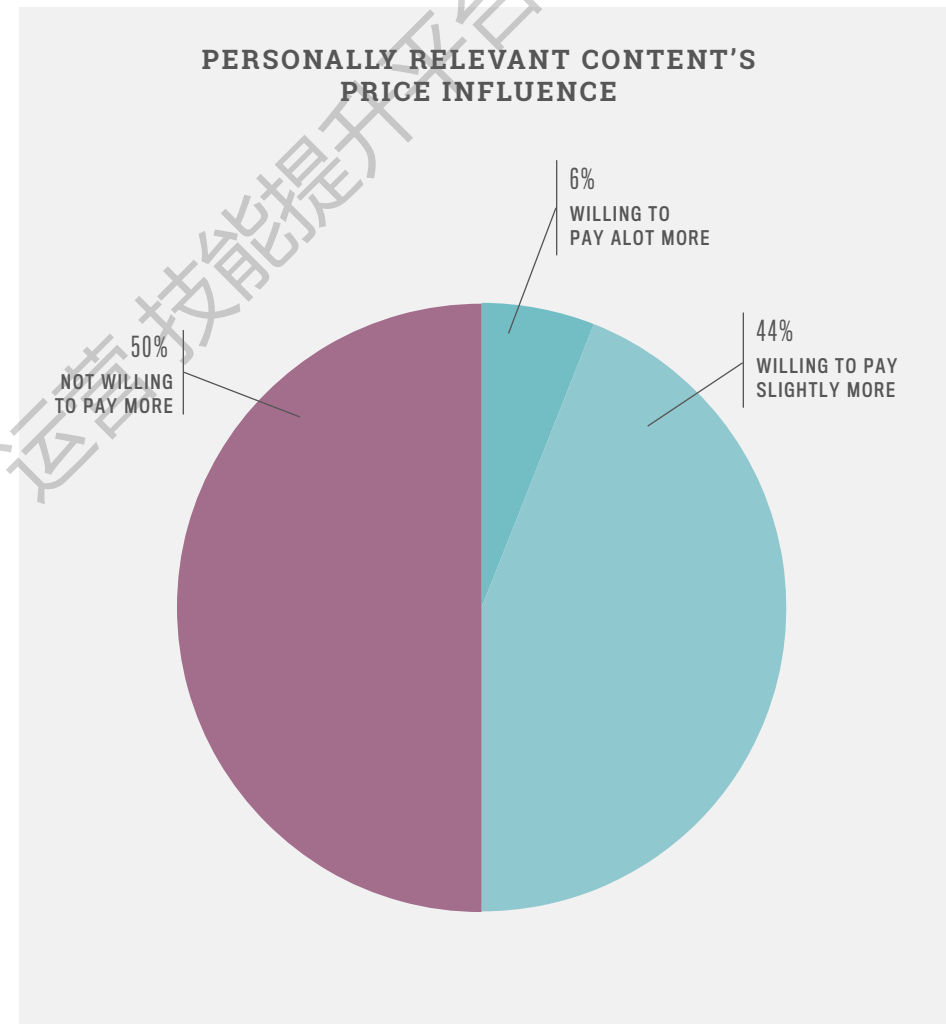
Seventy-eight percent (78%) of consumers indicate that if a brand does a good job of providing personally relevant content, it somewhat or significantly increases their intent to purchase that brand's products or services. Fifty-nine percent (59%) say their intent increases somewhat, 19% say their intent increases significantly, and 22% say their level of intent is unaffected.



THE PRICE IS RIGHT

Half of consumers would be willing to pay more for a brand's products or services if the brand does a great job of delivering personally relevant content.

Half (50%) of consumers indicate that if a brand does a good job of providing personally relevant content, they're willing to pay more for the brand's products or services. Forty-four percent (44%) say they'd be willing to spend slightly more, 6% say they'd be willing to spend a lot more and 50% say they would not be willing to pay more.

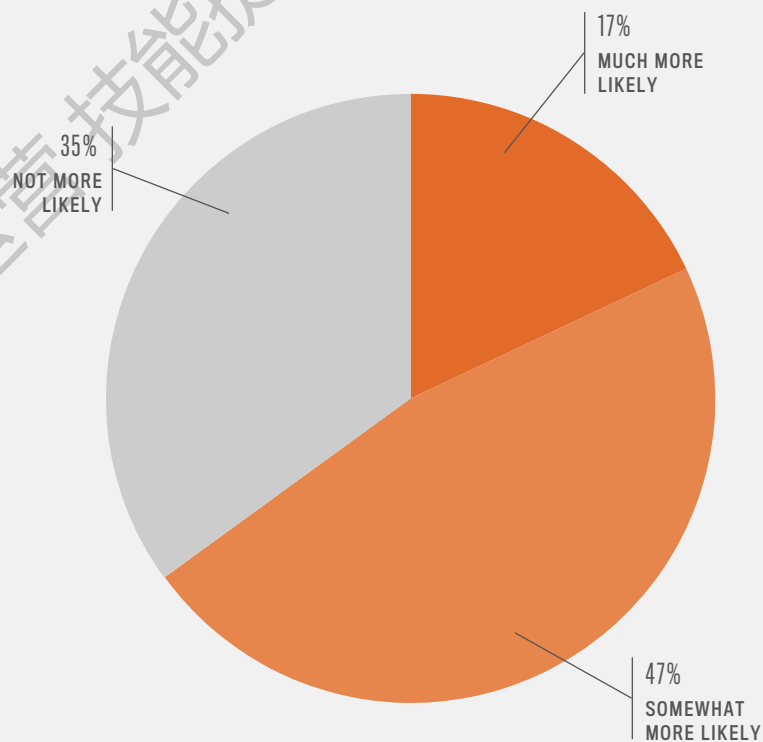


RELEVANCE EARNS RECOMMENDATION

Nearly two thirds of consumers say they are more likely to recommend a brand if it does a great job of delivering personally relevant content.

Forty-seven percent (47%) of consumers are somewhat more likely, and 17% are much more likely to recommend a brand if it does a great job of delivering personally relevant content. Thirty-five percent (35%) of consumers are not more likely to recommend the brand in the same case.

PERSONALLY RELEVANT CONTENT'S IMPACT
ON RECOMMENDATION LIKELIHOOD





What is at risk in
providing branded
content that is not
personally relevant?

CONTENT ATTENTION

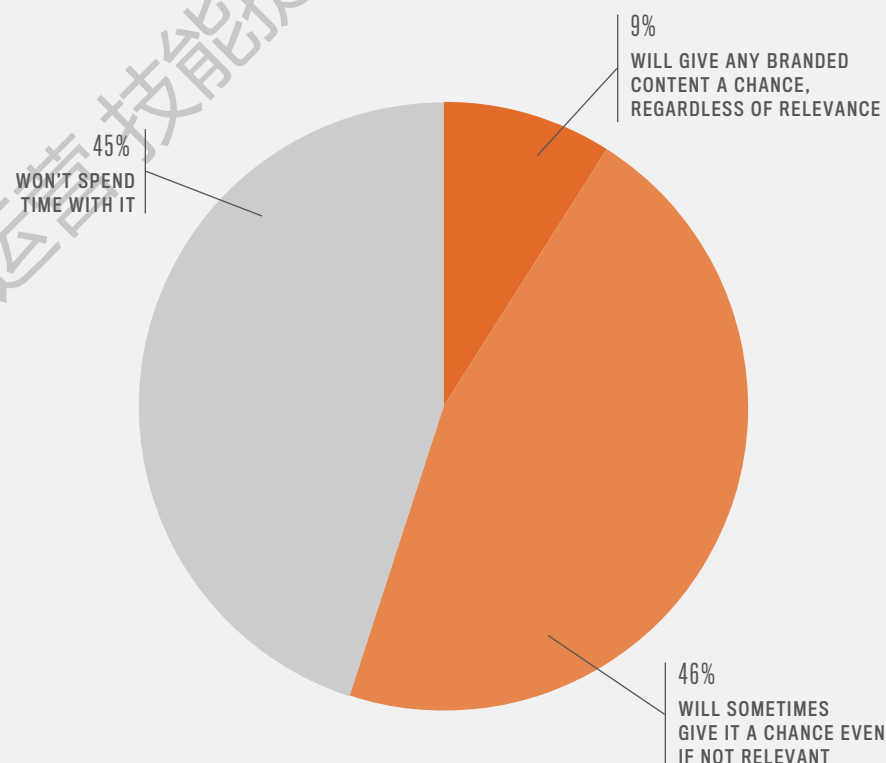
Nearly half of consumers say they won't spend time with branded content that isn't relevant to their interests.

Forty-five percent (45%) of consumers indicate they won't spend their time with branded content if it's not personally relevant to their interests. Forty-six percent (46%) say they'll sometimes give branded content a chance even if it's not relevant to their interests, and 9% say they'll give any branded content a chance regardless of relevance to their interests.

REACHING FOR A HIGHER BAR

While 45% of consumers say they won't spend their time with branded content that's not personally relevant, that figure is only 39% when it comes to publisher or media content. This difference points out that brands may need to work even harder than bona fide publishers and media companies in creating a personally relevant content experience – if they want to earn the consumer attention and engagement they're seeking.

WILLINGNESS TO SPEND TIME WITH CONTENT THAT'S NOT RELEVANT



MORE THAN

1/2

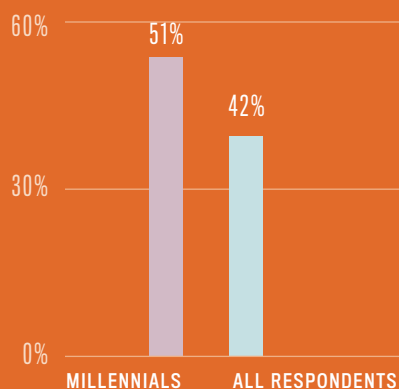
OF MILLENNIALS

ARE LESS INTERESTED IN A BRAND'S
PRODUCTS AND SERVICES IF THE CONTENT
THEY PROVIDE ISN'T PERSONALLY RELEVANT.

PRODUCT AND SERVICE INTEREST

Forty-two percent of consumers say they're less interested in a brand's products or services if the brand offers content that's not personally relevant.

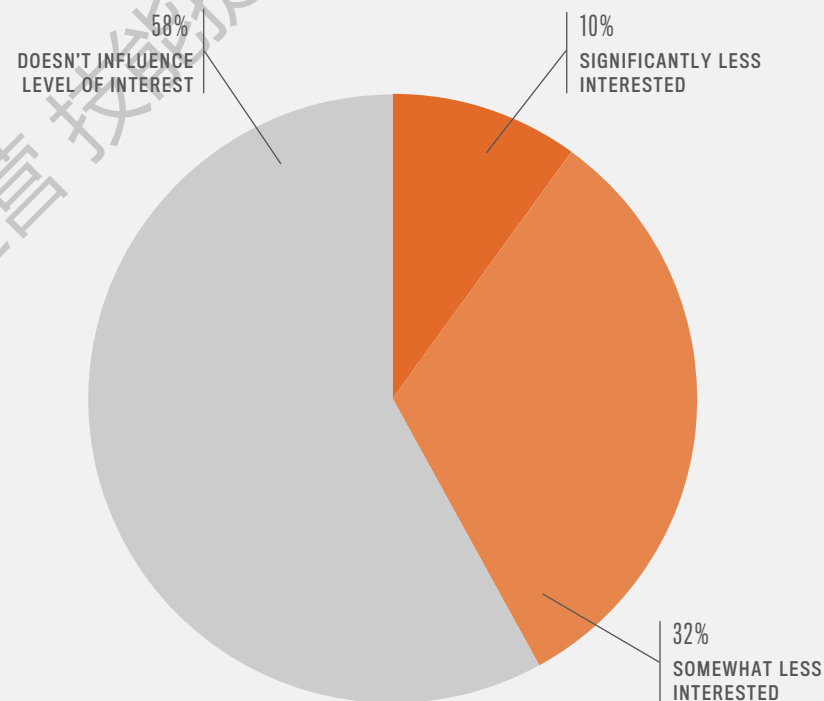
Forty-two percent (42%) of consumers say they're less interested in the products and services of brands who offer content that's not personally relevant, with 32% being somewhat less interested and 10% being significantly less interested. Fifty-eight percent (58%) say a lack of personal relevance in content doesn't influence their level of interest.



MILLENNIAL MAGNIFICATION

While 42% of our general audience is less interested in the products and services of brands who don't provide them with personally relevant content, that figure jumps to 51% for Millennials (age 18 to 34).

WILLINGNESS TO SPEND TIME WITH CONTENT THAT'S NOT RELEVANT



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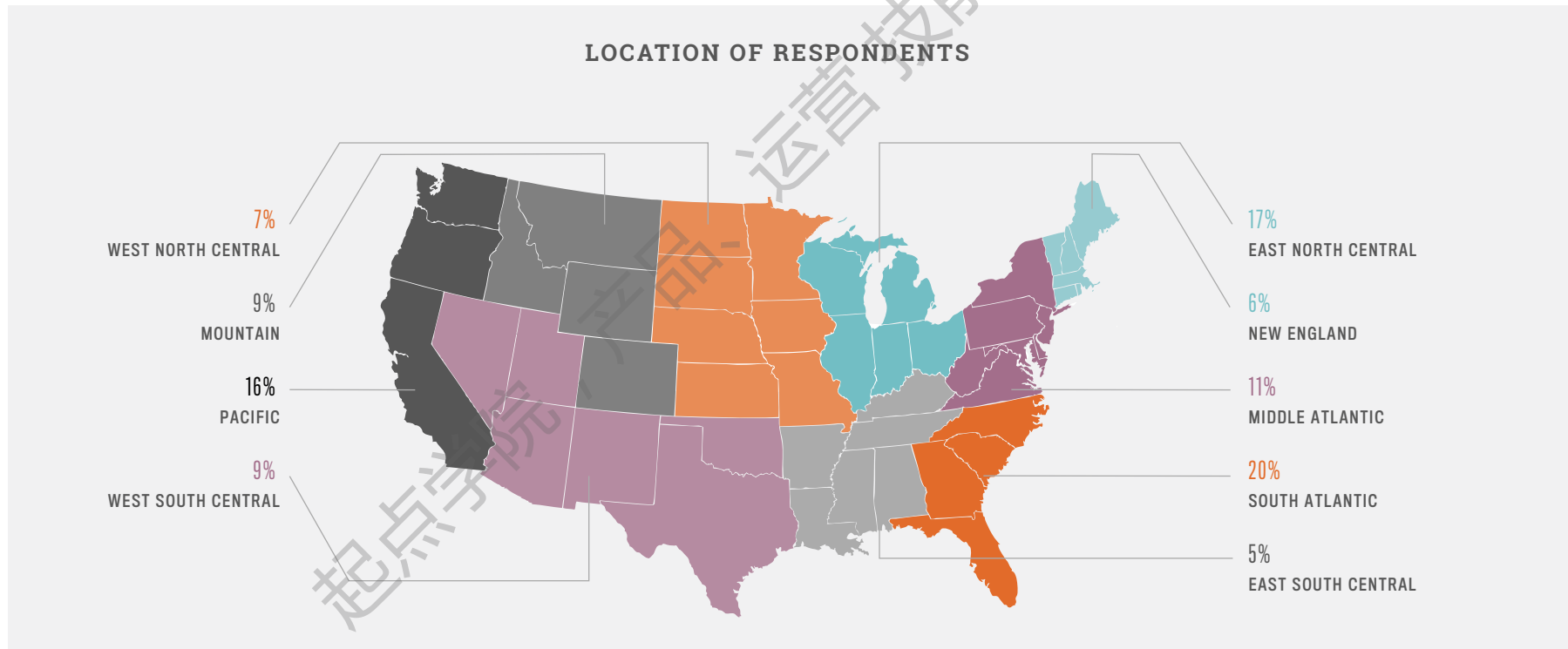


Background & Methodology

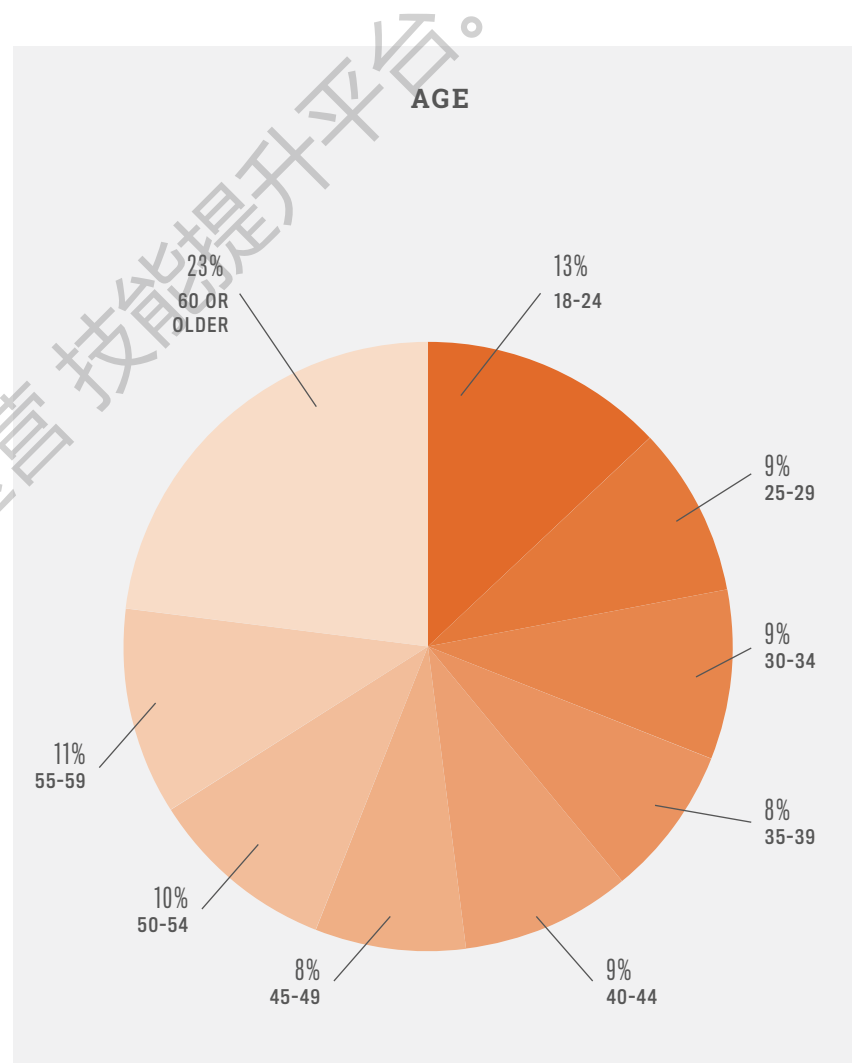
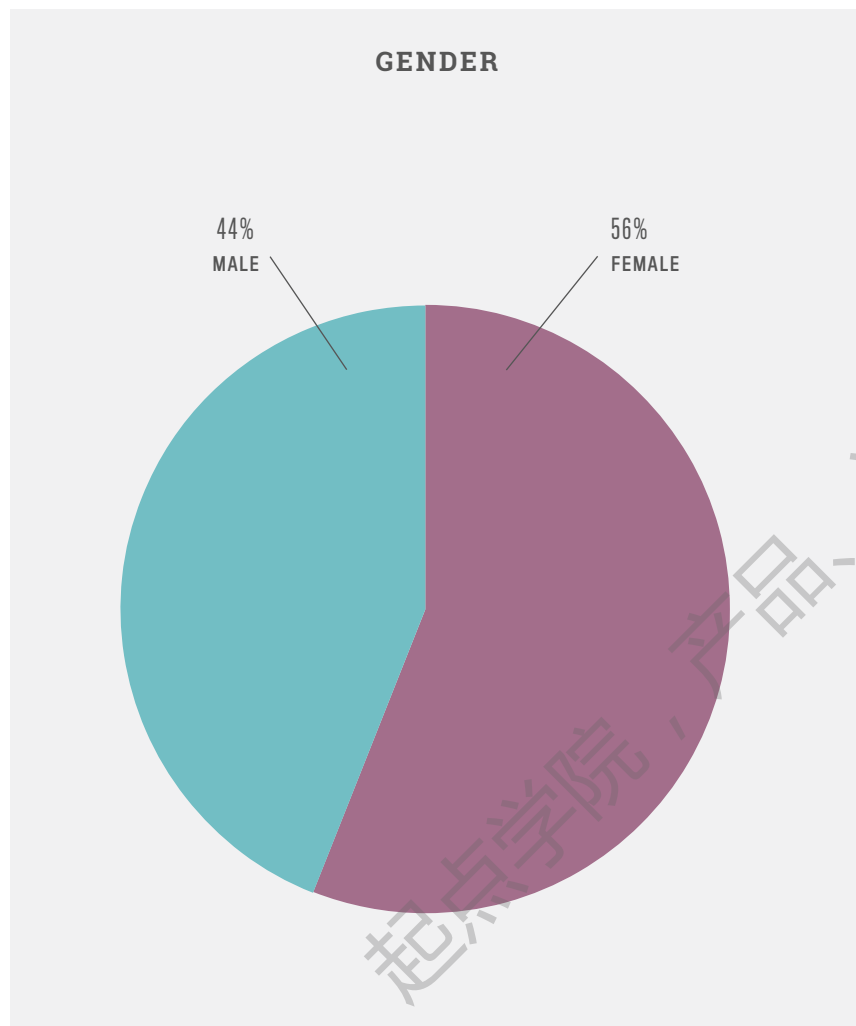
BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY

The Personalization Imperative study was conducted by OneSpot and Marketing Insider Group in October 2016. The study results are based on online survey responses from 1,582 adults in the United States who reported consuming branded

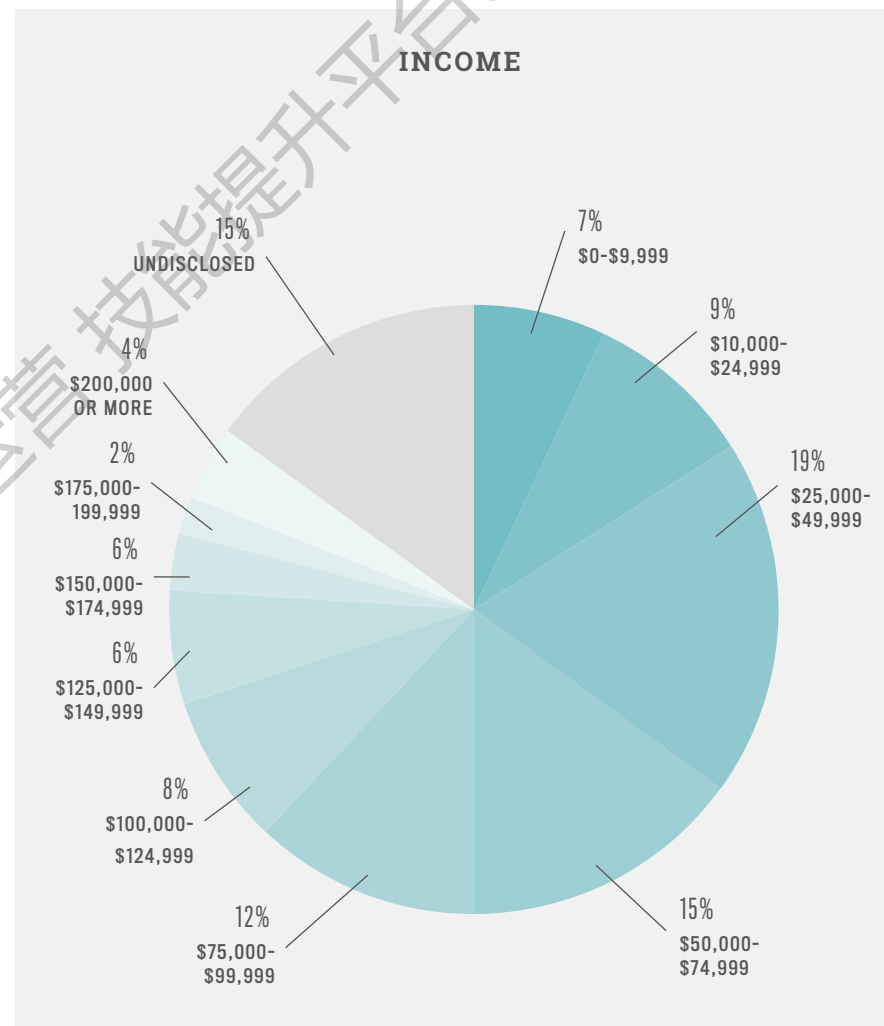
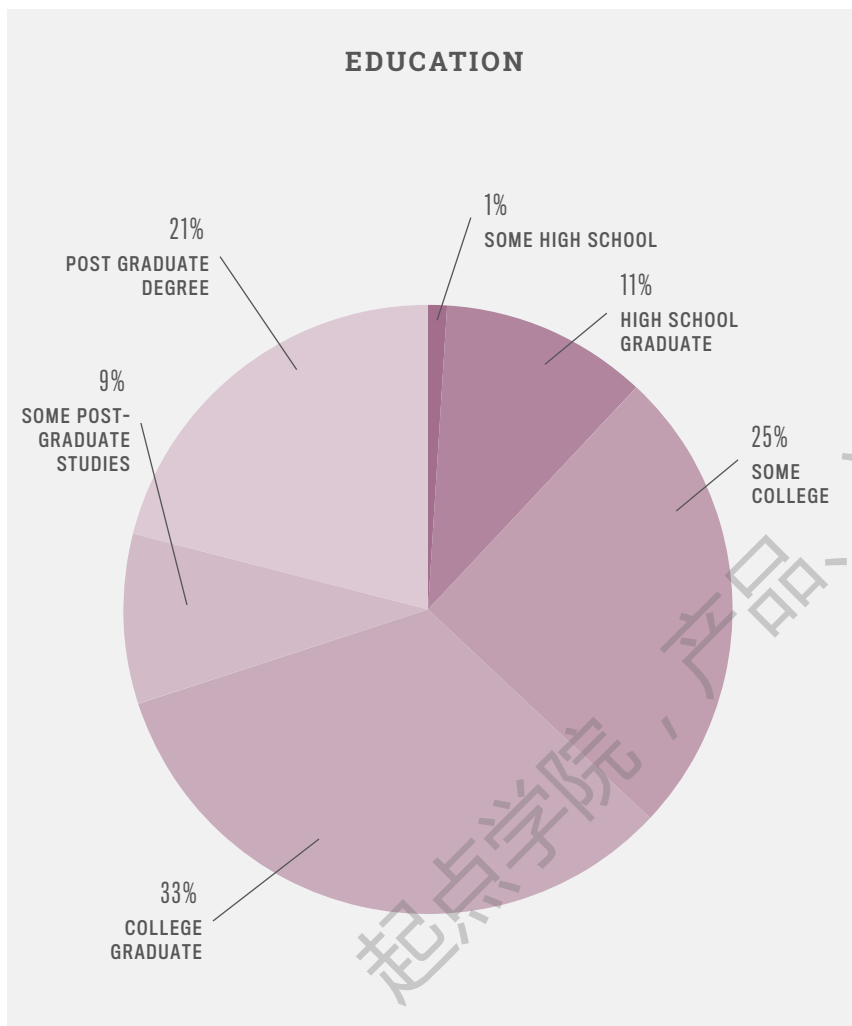
content Sometimes, Frequently or Very Frequently. Respondents who reported consuming content Rarely or Never were screened out of the survey. Following is a breakdown of respondents by key demographic characteristics:



BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY CONT.



BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY CONT.





ABOUT ONESpot

OneSpot is a technology platform for personalizing content marketing across digital channels. The solution helps marketers drive personalized, repeat engagement with branded content across websites, email and paid media channels, at scale. Fortune 500 brands like Nestlé, IBM, Whole Foods Market and Delta Faucet rely on OneSpot to build strong content-based relationships, uncover actionable content insights and drive quantifiable business results. Privately funded and based in Austin, Texas, OneSpot is a Forbes Top 100 Brand Publishing Solution, a three-time AlwaysOn Global 250 Winner and a three-time EContent 100 Winner. For more information visit onespot.com



ABOUT MARKETING INSIDER GROUP

The Marketing Insider Group is a marketing strategy consultancy focused on helping clients use content marketing to connect with audiences and generate measurable results. The firm's unique approach brings transformative value to clients by delivering content marketing strategies that engage targeted audiences, convert to results and deliver ROI that supports overall business objectives. For more information visit marketinginsidergroup.com

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