



CARS IN CONTEXT

————— *Targeting Automotive Content on YouTube* —————

Introduction

Auto Video Trends

New Car Surprises	4	Classic Cars	8
Car Tours	5	Racing	9
What's in My Car?	6	Road Trips	10
DIY / Car Repairs	7		

Data Spotlights

Top Car Types	11
Top Car Brands	12
Fan vs. Official	13

Interviews

Automaker: BMW	13
Influencer: That Dude in Blue	22

Introduction

From a last-minute pack of peppermint gum thrown into your cart while waiting in line at the grocery store, to all of the stress and paperwork of buying a new house, we all make purchases in various states of mind. These mindsets can run from that absentminded impulse as we wait at the register and grab that pack of gum, to the hyper-focused and often stressful longterm search for that perfect place to invest your life savings and call home. Within that broad spectrum of consumer mindsets is the one that accompanies buying a new or used car.

In this, our latest report, *Cars in Context: Targeting Automotive Content on YouTube*, ZEFR has again used its proprietary technology to sift through the millions of hours on YouTube to find the most useful, interesting, and unique content devoted to cars and automobile culture on the platform.



For consumers looking to buy a new car, sometimes the purchase itself is the least complex step in the process. Before the buying is the searching; after the purchase is the upkeep and maintenance. As *ZEFR Insights* has previously explored, YouTube can be especially helpful in countless ways, not only if you are in the mindset simply to buy something, but even if you are preparing for drastic change in lifestyle. (See, for example, our recent ZEFR Report, *Parenting on YouTube: The Top Child-Rearing Video Trends*).

Whether you're simply looking for a new minivan for your family, or a classic car enthusiast trying to find that essential part to finish restoring your dream machine, ZEFR has found the best channels, influencers, and content to suit your specific needs. If you are an auto brand, a parts manufacturer, PepBoys, or Jiffy Lube, this Report is your guide to find the best video categories on YouTube to align with and **target your message to the right consumer at the right time and in the right mindset.**

So sit down, buckle up, and enjoy the ride as we help navigate the world of automotive content on YouTube.



PART I: AUTO VIDEO TRENDS

To fully understand YouTube is to understand how video trends emerge, grow, and take off on the platform. As categories and styles of content become popular, more and more creators continue to iterate their own versions, until a trend is born. From “car tours” to “new car surprises” to “racing” and “reviews”, the automotive verticle on YouTube contains countless subcatergories. In this chapter, we explore a selection of this unique content.

NEW CAR SURPRISES

As one of the most heartwarming trends we've ever come across on YouTube, "new car surprise" videos capture people giving loved ones new cars. They range from parents gifting their teenager's first car, to grandparents receiving remodeled classics they used to own years ago, to sons and daughters surprising their parents with the dream car they always wanted.

There is no quantifiable way to capture the authenticity of a proud father and mother proclaiming, "No power locks, no power windows, but it's yours!" Family, pride, love, and life as it is actually lived—it's a narrative ad executives have been trying to recreate in television spots for decades. Why not join forces with the real thing on YouTube?

NEW CAR SURPRISES DATA

31K

{videos}

240M

{views}

2M

{engagements}

Video Examples



CAR TOURS

Much like room tours, a car tour is about showcasing a space. In this case, people film parts of their car, highlighting aspects of which they like, or dislike. Everyone has been in a situation where they've gone to a dealership and had a salesman guide them through what a car has to offer. Why not skip the sales pitch entirely and seek out genuine opinions from the car owners themselves, right from the comfort of your own home?

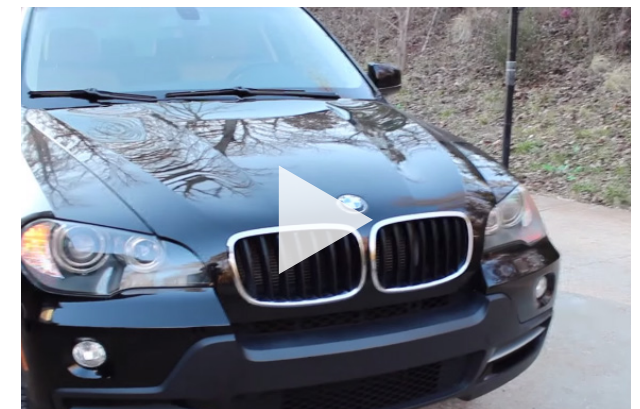
CAR TOURS DATA

1.6K
{videos}

14M
{views}

230K
{engagements}

Video Examples



WHAT'S IN MY CAR?

Similar to “What’s in My Bag?” videos that garner millions of views for beauty vloggers, “What’s in My Car?” videos involve someone going through the things they keep in all of the available places to store things in automobiles. (Hint: Glove compartments aren’t just for gloves anymore.) They can look a lot like a car tour, but instead of a critique of the car itself, these videos are more about the drivers and their particular habits and preferences. These videos can give a potential customer a close up and personalized guided tour through all of the compartments on offer on a particular model. For an automaker, this content is free consumer feedback, showing exactly how the custom is using, (or not using!) the car’s features.

WHAT'S IN MY CAR? DATA

280
{videos}

7M
{views}

163K
{engagements}

Video Examples



DIY / CAR REPAIR

The power of video to serve as a tool for learning a new skill is undeniable. Even the most detailed, step-by-step guidebook can only teach an apprentice so much—sometimes you just need to watch a master in action to fully understand a proper technique. This is why YouTube has become a must-use resource for anyone trying their hand at a craft for the first time. Targeting these “fix it myself” consumers can be a highly valuable opportunity for brands.

One of the most active DIY (aka, “do it yourself”) communities on YouTube is the world of “autos” and “cars.” For the DIY crowd, buying a car is only the first step in an ongoing relationship that includes everything from routine maintenance to custom installations to tricky repairs.

DIY / CAR REPAIR DATA

35K

{videos}

949M

{views}

4M

{engagements}

Video Examples



CLASSIC CARS

As the world's second-largest search engine, YouTube is a visual archive of culture. Whatever feelings of nostalgia that arise for a user, a quick search of YouTube will bring up relics of the past sure to satisfy the most die-hard collector. Classic cars are no exception and one of the biggest auto-related trends on the platform. From full restorations to tours of collections and museums, the classic car lover can relive their favorite rides with just a few clicks. For auto parts, brands, this is the perfect content for which to align.

CLASSIC CARS DATA

305K

{videos}

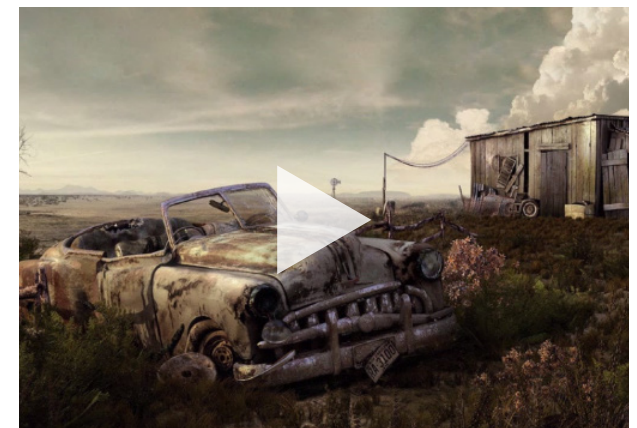
1.6B

{views}

7.3M

{engagements}

Video Examples



RACING

Racing is HUGE on YouTube. It's by far the biggest trend covered in this report in terms of view count. The breadth of content in this trend is so wide that we could easily dedicate an entirely separate report to it. If it's got wheels, then someone is likely racing it on YouTube. From street racing to dirt tracks to sand, the surfaces where people are willing to put speed to the test have no bounds. The ultimate winner? *Adrenaline*.

RACING DATA

895K

{videos}

8.2B

{views}

40M

{engagements}

Video Examples



ROAD TRIPS

If you really wanna see how a car holds up to the elements, take it on a cross-country road trip. And, when we say “elements,” we don’t just mean the extreme weather one might encounter from state to state. Rather, we’re talking about the daily grind of a group of humans living, eating, and sleeping inside a vehicle for weeks at a time. YouTube creators document their journeys for the world to see, and the results are an excellent resource for anyone considering a road trip of their own. Family vlogs frequently film their trips while trying not to get into too many fights, while beauty influencers make videos with travel essentials.

ROAD TRIPS DATA

95K

{videos}

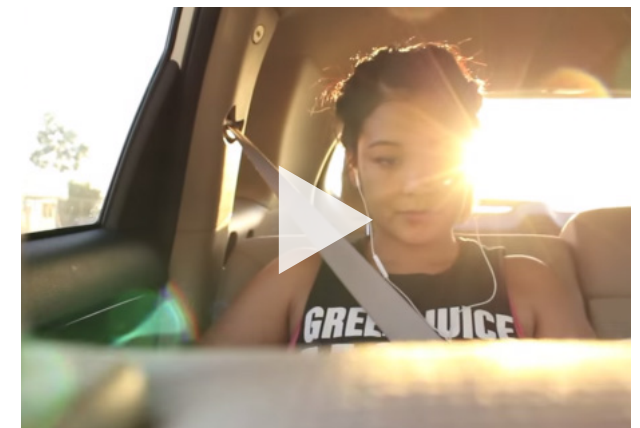
442M

{views}

5.5M

{engagements}

Video Examples





PART II: DATA SPOTLIGHTS

THE TOP CAR TYPES AND BRANDS

LEADING CAR TYPES ON YOUTUBE

■ VIEWS ■ VIDEOS

VIDEOS 0 150K 300K 450K 600K



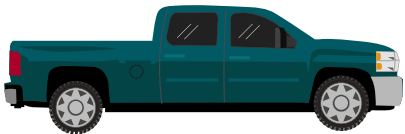
SEDAN



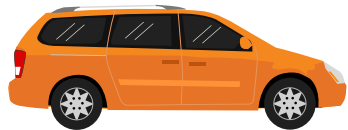
SUV



SPORT



PICK-UP TRUCK



MINIVAN



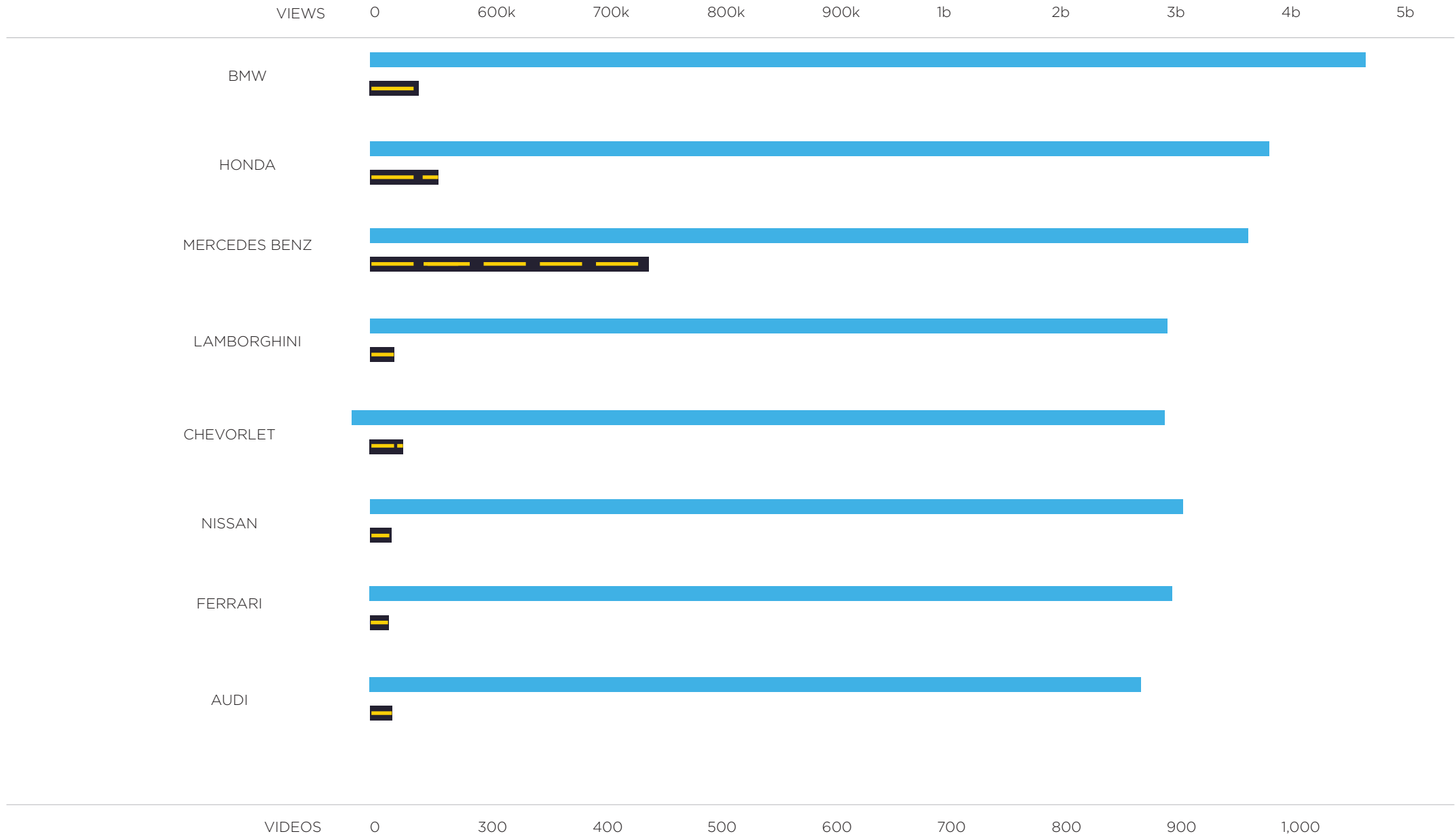
HYBRID/ELECTRIC



VIEWS 0 3B 6B 9B 12B

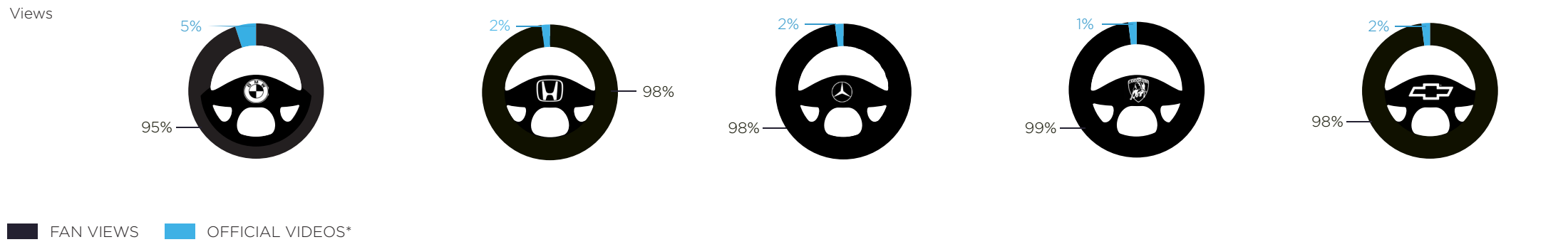
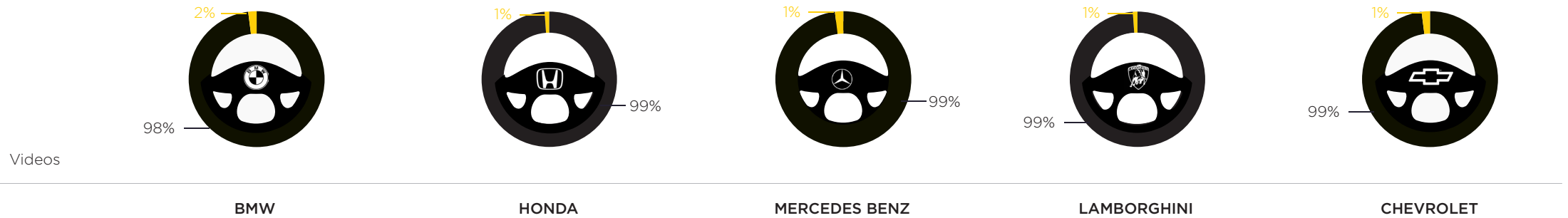
LEADING CAR BRANDS

TOTAL BRAND PRESENCE ON YOUTUBE ■ VIEWS ■ VIDEOS



FAN VIDEOS LEAD THE WAY ON YOUTUBE

■ FAN VIDEOS ■ OFFICIAL VIDEOS*



* "Official" represents videos uploaded to the brand's official YouTube channel



INFLUENCER INTERVIEW:

That Dude in Blue

In the introductory video posted to his YouTube channel, That Dude in Blue, aka David Patterson, says, “I film everything, from vlogs about the hardships of growing up, to tutorials, or even driving cars that absolutely terrify me.” It’s that latter activity that has seen his channel grow from its humble beginnings to attract over 300 thousand subscribers and over 40 million views across his video content. As an automotive “influencer,” Patterson works out of his hometown of Richmond, Virginia and credits “authenticity” as the primary ingredient to the success he’s had on the platform.

ZEFR Insights: You refer to yourself as a “full-time YouTuber.” How did you achieve this?

David Patterson: I achieved this by one simple thing that most other YouTubers will agree with: Just keep doing it. I’ve made videos since I was 15 years old and originally wanted to work in Hollywood. I eventually found out it wasn’t for me, and I saw others starting to become successful on the site and said to myself, “Why not me?” So, I tried a handful of different kinds of channels to do this full time like comedy, sketch, and even special effects. Nothing worked. I had always watched car videos online and wondered just how difficult it would be to make a car-oriented video. I made my first car review out of sheer curiosity, and it was the first time I had ever gotten over 5,000 views fairly quickly. I knew I was onto something. It was something I enjoyed doing, and did on and off throughout college. The day I graduated I had reached 1,000 subscribers and officially decided to pursue this until I made it work.



“

I had always watched car videos online and wondered just how difficult it would be to make a car-oriented video.

”

ZEFR: Do you have certain criteria that need to be met before you agree to working with a brand? What has been your experience so far in dealing with the business side of running a channel?

Patterson: My experience with brands is very little, actually. Every single car I have ever reviewed is not from a press car division or the brand. They are actually all owners' cars. I've been fortunate enough to have car enthusiasts let me drive their cars and share them with the world. A car actually owned by somebody has a real story behind it. The videos are more emotionally based in car culture than fact/numbers based, so it works out. However, brands have begun to approach me with offers and that I think that just comes with hard work. If you are doing something right, brand or sponsors will come to you. You shouldn't be afraid to ask! I've made some great partners in the auto industry because of it. I'm open to working with many of them. It is just a part of growing something as a passion and also as a business.



“
Staying authentic on Youtube is everything...with brands, you have to fully believe in the product you are working with.
”

ZEFR: How do you stay “authentic”? It’s an important ideal for a lot of YouTubers to maintain their authenticity even while working with brands. Is this something that is important to you and how do you make sure you are making content with your fans in mind and earning their trust?

Patterson: Staying authentic on YouTube is everything. It is extremely important to be yourself at all times, because the day you get recognized (which does happen once you grow) people are going to

want to meet the person they know through the videos. Thankfully, this has really been an advantage for me because it has brought my true self out over these years. With brands, you have to fully believe in the product you are working with. For example, my first brand deal I ever did was with a cleaning product that I was already using on my car. You have to avoid what I call “Wayne’s World syndrome” where it’s obviously forced. I trust my fans as much as they trust me. It’s an online relationship that comes full circle when you meet them in person. It’s incredible.

“

I decided to take it from a more laid-back approach. In other words: Is the car fun, or not?

”



ZEFR: As a YouTube creator, what lessons have you learned about filmmaking for the platform, or about cars, that has helped evolve your channel into the success it has become?

Patterson: Being an automotive YouTuber has taught me many things. One is: Don’t take things too personally. Constructive criticism is great, but it is few and far between in the world of trolls. As for filmmaking, I have met many other creators in the niche that helped me learn over time. Most importantly, how to stick out from the other channels as much as possible. Other car reviews are almost all the same. I decided to take it from a more laid-back approach. In other words: Is the car fun, or not? You can only say so much in the end about things that

almost all work in a similar way. YouTube [viewers] also have a pretty short attention span, so I try to keep my videos informative and to the point. I once did a film about a road trip called Rally North America where I spent a couple all nighters editing to get done resulting in an hour long film- nobody watched it. The three rules of Youtube- quality, quantity, and consistency. I have learned so much about different cars and brands over these years I feel incredibly blessed. Being the only car guy in my family, I have opened a door to a world I never had access too before really.

ZEFR: As a content-creator and a parent, what advice do you have for other parents, whose kids are watching YouTube, or will be soon?

JM: First off, I think it's so great that there are so many different ways for kids to get good content. However, as a parent, you need to make sure that the content is good. Our family has always tried to see what the content is (and what the message is) before the kids get to it. I think as a parent you should try as best you can to be the first line before the kids can see the content. You know, as parents we're all just trying to be the best that we can be.

ZEFR: You work across multiple social media platforms. Could you talk about how each platform helps to push out the Dude in Blue's message? In what ways do you approach making content for, say, Instagram, differently than for YouTube?

Patterson: Social media is key to YouTube success. YouTube is a crazy social media platform in itself, but the other ones can have a little bit more of a personal connection. Instagram is easily my most popular one. I use it to let viewers know about upcoming events, my videos being released, and my progress on trips. On Twitter, I probably have the most one-on-one relationships with my subscribers due to the ease of the platform and how quick it is. On Facebook, I have a fan page where I use the same techniques as on Instagram. Twitch streaming is also very vital, because gaming with your subscribers is a personal experience. One of my favorite apps/social media just released called Periscope is awesome for quick video stream updates and I love revealing channel secrets that nobody else knows about since they took the time to follow me there. I have others, but those are the ones I focus on the most. You make YouTube your "main event" or the headliner of the concert. The other social media platforms are the opening acts.

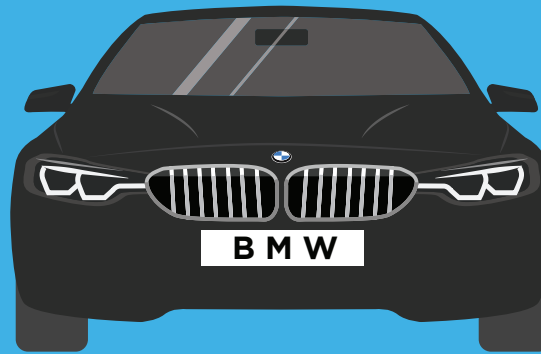
***ZEFR:** You work across multiple social media platforms. Could you talk about how each platform helps to push out That Dude in Blue's message? In what ways do you approach making content for, say, Instagram, differently than for YouTube?*

Patterson: Social media is key to YouTube success. Instagram is easily my most popular one. I use it to let viewers know about upcoming events, my videos being released, and my progress on trips. On Twitter, I probably have the most one-on-one relationships with my subscribers due to the ease of the platform and how quick it is. On Facebook, I have a fan page where I use the same techniques as on Instagram. Twitch streaming is also very vital, because gaming with your subscribers is a personal experience. One of my favorite apps that was just released is called Periscope. It's awesome for quick video stream updates and I love revealing channel secrets that nobody else knows about since they took the time to follow me there. I have others, but those are the ones I focus on the most. You make YouTube your "main event" or the headliner of the concert. The other social media platforms are the opening acts.



ZEFR: Finally, why YouTube?

Patterson: I get asked this all the time. The easiest answer is: Video streaming is the future of video entertainment. YouTube let's you make, quite literally, whatever you want. I have full creative control. I'm a one-man band and although it's stressful, it's incredibly satisfying knowing I built this on my own. YouTube is a little over-saturated with content now to get started, but it is still a great way to open the doors to bigger opportunity. Digital is where it's at.



AUTOMAKER INTERVIEW:

BMW

For *Cars in Context*, ZEFR ran a search of all the top auto brands on YouTube to measure their total footprint on the platform, including official, brand-owned channels, and unofficial “fan” channels. In the end, BMW came out ahead in terms of total views. What’s more, BMW also maintains the lead among all official channels with over 211 million total views.

To help shed a light on why the automaker is leading the brand race on YouTube, we spoke with BMW Group’s Head of Brand Communication Uwe Dreher about social media trends, the importance of virality, and how to maintain message control amidst the seemingly unmanageable universe of digital video.

ZEFR Insights: How much do you pay attention to uploaded content about BMW and are you comfortable with the democracy of YouTube, where users can create content that you might never see, let alone control?

Uwe Dreher: For every brand it is a big challenge to accept the fact that there are conversations about the products and services that can hardly be controlled. Even before the time when “Social Media” was called “Web 2.0” or “Emerging Media” those conversations already existed. Though, the potential impact was much lower. Nowadays, the visibility of those conversations is huge and the professional management of that off-site content is becoming key.

BMW is paying a lot of attention to those conversations and external content assets. No matter if it is criticism or brand love, the objective of BMW is to monitor all relevant brand-related contributions. Brands need to be aware of the fact, that user-generated content is shaping the brand’s reputation as well as brand generated content.



UWE DREHER

ZEFR: The upside of all the content about BMW being uploaded across social media platforms is that you get to actually see consumers interact with your cars and say things that might otherwise have never reached the “boardroom.” What things have you learned from listening to actual BMW owners that has helped inform your overall strategy when trying to expand BMW’s base and, well, sell more cars?

Dreher: It’s not that listening to UGC [user generated content] is replacing market research or classical customer surveys, but especially from a marketing perspective, we learned a lot about the different categories of fans and potential customers and that there is a need to target the right message to the right target audience. Not every BMW fan or customer is interested in every BMW product.



“
there is a need to target the right message to the right target audience.
”

ZEFR: How do you feel about “trends” in social media? How does BMW balance incorporating trends into its social media strategy and still maintain its historic integrity that was cemented long before these platforms were even available?

Dreher: As a premium brand, BMW is very selective and rather reserved when it comes to adapting trending topics and viral memes. On the one hand, this could boost your short-term awareness, but the objective is to reach out to a target group that is sustainably interested in the brand and our products. Nevertheless, there are trends that perfectly match with our brand values and our communication strategy.

The decision for adding a new platform to the channel mix is also not based on hype fired up by some social media consultant, but on a detailed analysis of the potential to reach out to the right target groups.

ZEFR: On YouTube alone, BMW consistently outpaces all other automotive brands in views and engagements. How much of this is a mixture of luck and strategy? And, is the often unpredictable nature of what does and what doesn't "go viral" a concern, or is BMW more focused on making content that is true to the spirit of the company?

Dreher: Success on YouTube should not only be defined by the quantity of views and engagements alone as they are quite easy to manipulate. In fact it should be about the quality of the views and their contribution to the communication targets. Therefore we are differentiating between several content types and not all of them are curated to gain millions of views.

Some of them, for instance, are optimized for potential customers that are in the phase of deciding on a new car and searching for detailed product information. On the other hand, we have content formats with a strong focus on generating awareness and to reach out to new target groups as we did for a campaign to launch the new BMW 2 Series. "The Epic Driftmob" video attracted over 14 million views and was intended to be a so-called scroll-stopper in every social media timeline. To reach viral effects, it needs a perfect mixture of strategy, online optimized content, and some media budget to amplify visibility.



ZEFR: In your estimation, how much has "social media"—specifically as a BMW marketing strategy—grown in the past few years? What does a new idea that involves YouTube (or, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat, etc.) have to look like in order to pass internal scrutiny and live up to BMW's high standards?

Dreher: The integration of social media in the general marketing strategy has reached kind of a maturity level over the last few years. Today, there is a profound understanding of the potential but also about the limitations of those channels. In the early days Social Media, communication was expected to be a free-of-charge generator for

awareness and even leads, where branded content could potentially go viral and every fan is a potential customer. In some rare cases this might still be true, but it moved to a more realistic view about the strengths and the weaknesses. Successful social media campaigns should be fresh, entertaining, trackable, with low-entry barriers, matching with the brand values and matching with the expectations of the target group.

ZEFR: How does BMW define a successful social media campaign? What metrics do you use, or is it also partly instinctual? How have past campaigns influence current or forthcoming initiatives?

Dreher: As there are different kinds of campaigns, the KPIs are different depending on the individual objectives. Sometimes it is the increase of awareness for a product, or the brand, either for existing customers, or completely new target groups. Sometimes it's the number of conversions to the website or the triggered success events like test-drive appointments, or requests for information. But for all campaigns, there are specific learnings that are influencing upcoming activities.



THE EPIC DRIFTMOB

BMW'S VIRAL HIT

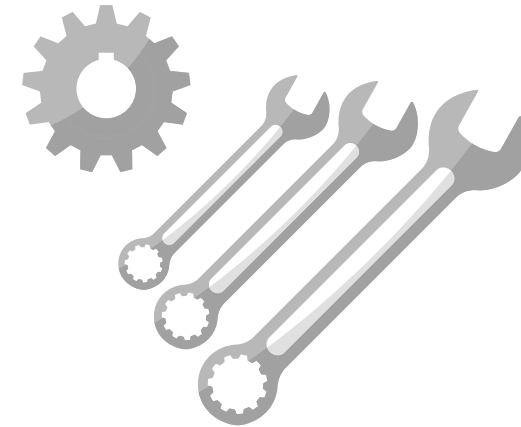
Conclusion

What Does This Mean for Brands?

With Cars in Context: Targeting Automotive Content on YouTube, ZEFR has explored the unique marriage of consumers in search of specific content (mindsets), combined with the undeniably real moments that users upload hourly to the platform. This presents brands with an opportunity unavailable anywhere else. Put simply, YouTube is a universe both created for and used by real people. The genuine moments that abound on the platform allow brands to not only understand what their consumers want, but to become a meaningful participant in the real lives that are being lived on YouTube.

For someone looking to buy a car, YouTube serves up an enormous wealth of valuable information. Before a potential consumer heads into a dealership for a test drive, they can find out what ordinary people really think of a particular automobile. On YouTube, viewers can see authentic engagement with a vehicle's features from unbiased vloggers and car owners, skipping the sales pitch of a car dealer entirely.

Contextual targeting is all about understanding the mindset of your audience at the time you are trying to reach them. The audience for cars and automotive supplies come to YouTube looking for an answer



to a particular question: What kind of car do I want to buy? What are people saying about the cars I think I might want to purchase? Where can I find that one part to restore my classic car? In other words, viewers of automotive content on YouTube are actively searching for the right video to solve their unique problem.

One vital question remains: Is your brand ready to find that content, learn from it, align with it, and supply millions of potential customers with the answers they seek?



GET MORE INFO



[BLOG.ZEFR.COM](https://blog.zefr.com)