

CONSUMER INSIGHTS MARCH/APRIL 2014

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COMEDY CENTRAL'S "OUTRAGEOUS & CONTAGIOUS: STAND-UP STUDY"

Social platforms have fueled a new golden age for comedy, in which fans develop personal relationships with comedians and share stand-up content throughout their personal networks. In its study "Outrageous & Contagious: Stand-up Comedy," Comedy Central delved into this trend and expanded on its research into the Millennial humor experience to better understand the role of stand-up for this age group. The findings reveal that stand-up is a fan favorite that's on the rise, and identify key factors that make for the ideal stand-up experience.

Key Findings

Millennials seek out stand-up, whether through TV, social media or sources like email lists, local papers and comedy club sites. Sales for tickets to live stand-up events rose 19% in 2013. Stand-up is part of their everyday life and something they want to share.

- 8 in 10 agree that stand-up is the purest and most authentic form of comedy today
- 69% say that stand-up is on the rise
- 63% say that stand-up comedy is better than in previous years
- 51% attend a live stand-up show at least a few times a year

There are four Fan Fundamentals that constitute an ideal stand-up experience.

- **Relatable & Authentic:** Stand-up is most authentic when it is Relatable, Real, and Raw.
 - Relatable: Reflects life experiences in all their awkward glory
 - Real: Disarming comedians who laugh at themselves
 - Raw: Says what the viewer is thinking
- **Topical:** Comedians are uniquely positioned to tackle difficult topics within the safe space of comedy.
 - Informed comedians inspire fans to learn more about issues and challenge the status quo
 - Comedians can demystify and decode difficult topics
 - Social commentary provokes a feeling of enlightenment
- **Diversity:** Diversity in comedy is about more than race. Fans say that any differences can be highlighted and joked about to foster acceptance. Laughing at difference can disempower stereotypes and move the culture forward.
- **Courageous & Edgy:** Fans value stand-up that explores taboo themes with reckless abandon. Comedians are trusted voices because they don't shy away from the most sensitive issues.

In addition to being funny, of course, fans look for specific traits when it comes to their favorite comedians:

- 75% look for comedians that tell a good story
- Over 70% look for clever and smart comedians
- 62% look for comedians that have a unique perspective

→ 60% look for comedians that make them think

Brands who respect the craft score with fans – that is, those brands who grant fans access to content in its purest form, either uncensored or unedited.

→ 87% of fans feel that their support is important to keeping these programs on the air

→ 86% of fans feel that they deserve credit for supporting uncensored/unedited programming

Fans value comedians as well as brands that have a sense of humor about themselves. Companies who let comedians poke fun at them earn the respect of fans.

→ 93% agree that the company has a sense of humor

→ 86% say that it makes them think more highly of the brand

→ 83% say it makes them more interested in the brand

Implications:

→ Brands can connect more deeply with consumers by tapping into the connection between Millennials and stand-up comedy/comedians.

→ Brands can deepen fan engagement by offering uncensored, unaired stand-up material on social platforms where Millennials can interact with and share content.

→ Authenticity is paramount among Millennials. Companies that embrace edgy, tell-it-like-it-is comedy stand to build brand recognition and loyalty among Millennial audiences.

The Methodology:

This study is based on in-home buddy groups, “jokus groups” (focus group that incorporates live stand-up), on-the-street interviews at the South Beach Comedy Festival, ideation sessions with stand-up fans and professional comedians, and an online survey of comedy fans across multiple platforms. The qualitative sample was with participants ages 18-34; the online survey sample was with participants ages 18-49.

VIMN’S “POWER OF LAUGHTER”

In its ongoing research into “The Power of Laughter,” Viacom International Media Networks offers an international perspective on the social and emotional benefits of laughter. The multi-layered, multi-territory look across 12 countries explores the impact of laughter on people’s well being, as well as how much more engaged audiences are when watching funny or humorous content. Thanks to an innovative facial scanner, GfK Emo Scan, that decodes subjects’ emotional response to visual stimulus by tracking intricate facial movements, this study was able to quantitatively measure the impact of laughter with moment-to-moment analyses. The findings reveal that laughter is life’s best medicine for the mind, body and soul, and that comedy boosts levels of engagement.

Key Findings

Laughter leads to happier, healthier, more sexually active lives and helps people maintain physical, emotional and social balance.

→ Physical Benefits:

- 63% of “heavy laughers” describe their weight as “target weight”
- Heavy laughers are also more likely to exercise compared to “occasional laughers”

→ Emotional Benefits:

- Heavy laughers are 51% more likely to have a positive outlook on life
- 37% of heavy laughers say watching a funny TV show improves their mood
- Heavy laughers are optimistic, with 68% satisfied with their job and 72% excited about their future

→ Social Benefits:

- Heavy laughers have 28% more Facebook friends than light laughers
- Heavy laughers are 32% more likely to describe their sex life as “good” or “just right”

During and immediately after viewing funny content, viewers are more engaged.

- Online facial coding tracked facial expressions of viewers who were presented with comedy content running into commercial breaks. This was done through a webcam at a rate of 10 times per second, registering more than 12 million emotional touchpoints. Based on facial coding, laughter has an immediate effect on viewers, not only boosting levels of emotional engagement with content but also with the commercials.
- When ads were viewed after a piece of funny content, viewers engaged with the ads more positively.

Implications:

- Funny content offers a halo effect beyond the featured content, into the ad break. Across the world, embedding your marketing message into or in-between funny content is an especially effective way to reach audiences.

Methodology:

This study is based on online interviews with 1,350 respondents across 12 countries, followed by lengthier online interviews measuring response to programming content and commercial block with 2,250 respondents in 9 countries.