

Research

The Yellow Pages Mythbusters -- Yellow Pages and Younger Consumers (reprinted from YPtalk.com - view the original (<http://www.yptalk.com/research.cfm>))

02/05/2009 - By Kathleen Pierz, The Pierz Group

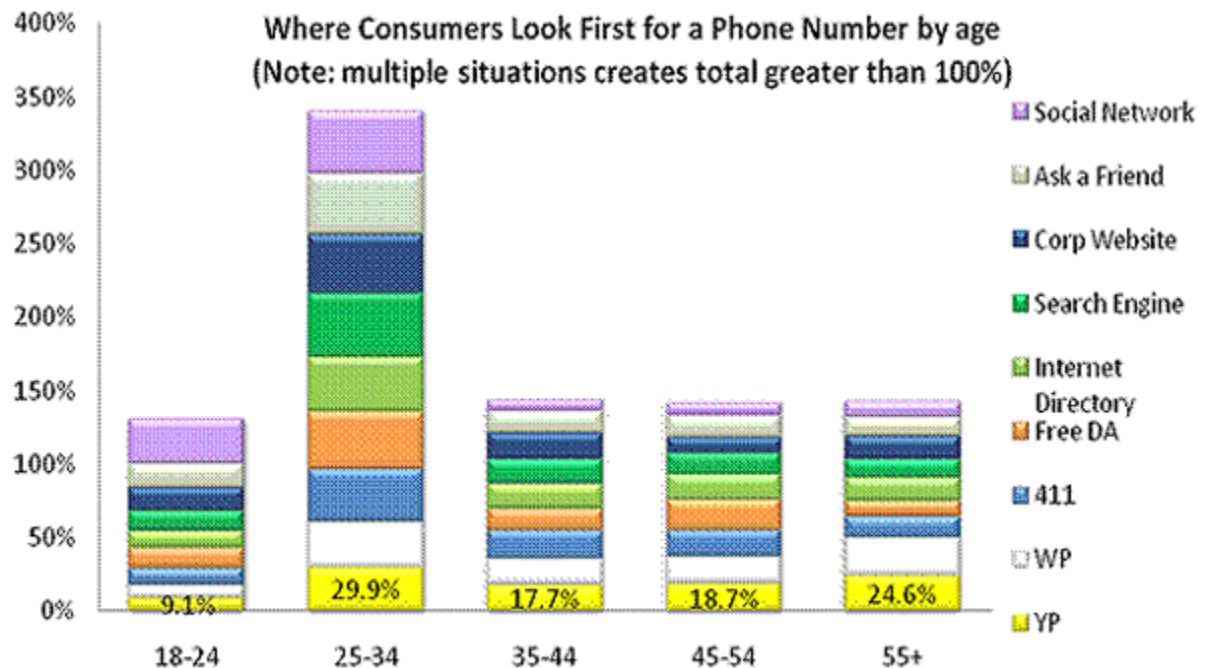
With due deference to the Discovery Channel team, they aren't the only ones who conduct research to either confirm or "bust" popular myths. Rather predictably (unfortunately), we will not be blowing things up or using a trusty crash dummy to test a popular Yellow Pages myth, but we have done the research to establish a definitive position regarding generational differences in the use of this important media.

The Myth: Younger consumers don't use the Yellow Pages. From a Yellow Pages perspective, how often have you heard that comment that younger consumers do not use the print Yellow Pages? Everywhere you turn some pundit is shouting that the "younger generation" (often undefined) isn't using print Yellow Pages, and that without this younger demographic, the book can't deliver value to small and medium-sized businesses.

Our Job: Conduct the research to confirm or bust this myth. We conducted primary and secondary consumer research to find out what media consumers do use, when, where and how. We talked to 1,500 U.S. consumers from 18 to over 55 and asked them where they looked for information when they needed it. We also looked into what consumers did once they got to the Yellow Pages.

What did we learn?

Consumers use a range of sources for telephone number lookups depending on their needs and where they are. The group that looks up more telephone numbers than any other group, also uses the print Yellow Pages more than any other age group. You guessed it, 25 to 34 year olds; those Gen X and Gen Y types are the biggest users of the print Yellow Pages.



Source: The Pierz Group; National Consumer Research 2007

Just like Adam and Jamie from MythBusters we wanted to follow up on these results. In follow-on research with 25 to 34 year olds we asked them about the Yellow Pages usage and why they used it as often as they did, especially when compared to Internet sources. Their answers were surprisingly consistent: nearly everyone we interviewed told us that when they used the Yellow Pages they knew they would find a local business, not one across town or across the state. So, these results seem solid so far.

Next we looked to research conducted by Knowledge Networks/ SRI, a National Usage Study conducted in 2008. Here is what we learned:

- 25-34 Year-old consumers are more likely to contact a business after a Yellow Page look-up than any other age demographic with 82% calling the business after looking in the print book.
- 25-34 Year-old consumers are more likely to look at 3 or more businesses while using the Yellow Pages than any other age demographic with 48% comparing three or more businesses.

Now we know that 25 to 34 year olds use the print Yellow Pages more than any other group and are much more likely than any other age group to contact a business after using the Yellow Pages to compare several options. Just like TV's Mythbusters, we still had to look further into this myth to make sure we had all the facts. What else tells us that our research makes sense?

What has always driven Yellow Pages usage? new needs, and life changes. Twenty-five to thirty-four year olds experience more life changes than any other demographic segment.

This segment is most likely to:

- Move to a new city¹
 - People who have moved two or more times use the Yellow Pages on a weekly basis nearly twice as often as those who had not moved
 - Those who have lived at their current address for less than a year have a much higher rate of looking at both ads and listings than those more established
- Purchase a vehicle
- Get married
- Have children for the first time
- Purchase a home or lease a new apartment
- Acquire insurance

All of these life changes drive a huge range of new needs, and subsequently a huge need for information about new, local companies who can provide the goods and services to meet these new needs.

Looking again at the chart above we can confirm that the 25 to 34 year-old group also used the Internet more than any other group to look up a business number when they need it. This is logical, as over half of the adult internet population is between 18 and 44 years old. The real answer is that this age group uses lots of media to make decisions about what businesses they contact for goods and services. They are in fact big users of the Internet for telephone number look ups, but they remain the biggest users of the print Yellow Pages as well.

One last question to consider before we can render a decision on this myth. What about my college age son/daughter you ask? They don't use the Yellow Pages. You are correct. This age group are very light users of Yellow Pages, but just wait until they graduate! Let's face it, how much disposable income does this 18 to 24 year-old demographic have at their disposal? Most are supported by their parents, and they look up fewer phone numbers than any other group of adults. They don't have as many needs for finding new businesses that don't involve pizza, bookstores or video games.

Our verdict? This Myth is so busted!

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About The Pierz Group:

The Pierz Group was founded by Kathleen Pierz in 2003. Ms. Pierz is one of the best known industry analysts in the directory assistance/enquiry (DA/DO) space. She has published over 100 insightful reports and articles on the key issues affecting the information services industry worldwide and is a sought after speaker. With over 25 years of strategic planning and marketing experience and a solid background in the information services industry (Yellow Pages and directory assistance/enquiry) from both the carrier and the vendor side of the business, she delivers a focused, actionable perspective within this dynamic market. Pierz Group Senior Analysts and partner firms working in Europe, Asia and Latin America provide broad geographic coverage and market knowledge.

¹Knowledge Networks/ SRI, a National Usage Study, 2008