



Who buys the most home improvement materials? The answer may surprise you.

...and how they consume media may too!

For Building Material Research, Consumers Now Turn Primarily to the Internet

Consumer research recently made available to the industry shows that homeowners are in a major transition into digital for home improvement. This is true of general retail items, and it is becoming increasingly true of consumers researching and purchasing home improvement and building products as well. The internet has become the new primary source for seeking, receiving and pushing advertising information for building materials for individuals and industries. This means that it's jumped ahead of word-of-mouth via friends and relatives as the number one resource for receiving recommendations, product information and tips for what materials to purchase and how to apply them. In contrast, materials such as books, magazines and home improvement television shows have declined as key information resources.

What Data Suggests About Consumer Research Habits

There are several factors that seem to impact how consumers go about collecting building materials information before making plans or purchases. Potential buyers with a higher income level in their household are more likely to reference multiple sources. Referencing the internet, as well as friends and relatives for word-of-mouth recommendations, were fairly consistent resources across income

levels and were the top two sources referenced. The length of time a potential materials buyer has been living in their home has a direct impact on their purchasing process as well. A wider range of resources are used by homeowners that have been in their home for 3-5 years. This particular group of homeowners is also more likely to reference home improvement magazines and television shows, over homeowners that have been in their current residence for over 11 years. Overall, the data shows that younger generations are referencing the internet. They also are more likely than older homeowners to use television ads and home improvement television shows for their information.

How much money was spent on home improvement in the past 12 months impacts research habits. Consumers who spent over \$2,000 in the past year are more likely to use multiple sources as they plan their next project. This group was more likely to use contractors and professionals specifically as information references, alongside consumer reports and other means of collecting information.

Home Improvement Retailer Websites Have the Advantage

The numbers show that home improvement retailer websites are the most used online source, an effective means of reaching consumers with building material information. Between these general retailer websites,

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and home improvement “How to” videos, approximately half of homeowners referencing internet sources use these types for information and idea generating. Retailer websites were referenced by 54% of consumers as their online source, while general home improvement information in the forms of articles and webpages were referenced by 48% of online consumers. “How to” videos were referenced by 47% of consumers online, according to the study released in 2016, well ahead of manufacturers’ websites at 39% or home improvement television shows at 32%. Alongside traditional website access, social media is beginning to make its presence felt in perpetuating ideas, materials and purchases between materials providers and consumers. The visual aspect and high user engagement of Pinterest puts it in the lead as the most meaningful social media source, which 18% of online users reference for information. Facebook comes

in second at 15%, although Instagram continues to grow in power and influence with younger users for its positive image and its reputation for lower online confrontation when compared to Facebook or Twitter.

How Online Sources Varied Depending on the Type of Customer

Depending on the demographic you are trying to target in your marketing strategy, online sources can be adjusted. Younger people in general use the internet more to gather information, with Millennials being far more likely to use multiple online sources, including social media, in their research. Generation X internet users don’t have the same intensity in their internet and social media use, though their online research patterns are similar, albeit less frequent. Members of the Mature generation are the least likely to use how-to videos when researching.

Recently, HomeAdvisor released its True Cost Report on generational trends in home improvement, the negligible impact of rising interest rates on homeowner decision making and the growth of home improvement spending.

Highlights from the 2018 True Cost Report:

- Millennials are not only more likely than any other generations to remodel any part of their homes, but they’re twice as likely as baby boomers to complete bathroom and kitchen remodeling projects
- Millennials have completed the most home projects in the past 12 months — 72% more, 42% more, and 18% more projects than the silent generation, baby boomers and Gen Xers, respectively

- Five in six millennials plan to spend as much or more on home improvements in the coming 12 months as they did last year
- Homeowners spent an average of \$6,649 on home improvements per household in the last 12 months
- The majority of homeowners say they’re planning to spend as much or more on home improvements in the coming year with a heavy focus on cosmetic enhancements such as painting, landscaping and remodeling

Data in the True Cost Report is based on an online survey conducted by HomeAdvisor’s internal research team. The survey was conducted nationwide among 1,012 homeowners from March 21-30, 2018. All survey participants were primary or joint decision makers in decisions related to home maintenance and improvement projects completed in the prior 12 months.

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Whether it's to save money, or to feel a more personal connection to the home, DIYers are on the rise in younger generations. These people likely want to save money and embrace a more environmentally sustainable lifestyle. They are highly active on social media, with Facebook being their primary social media roost for individuals who are trying to fully embrace the DIY lifestyle. They also frequent LinkedIn, Instagram and Twitter far more than they do Houzz. No matter the age or demographic, DIY groups all utilize "how-to" online videos and articles as resources.

The Recent, Exponential Spike in Internet Use as a Building Materials Resource for Consumers

There's been a significant shift in the data seen in the 2016 study versus the one published nine years prior, especially when considering which resources are the most important. Online has spiked from 17% to 24%, putting it from third to first place in terms of resources. Friends and relatives, through word-of-mouth, have always been a relevant source. However, this group experienced a slight decline from 23% to 20% in how often it was used. Other significant resource declines were seen in books on home improvement, in-store DIY clinics and manufacturer and retailer brochures. Other than the internet, consumer reports was the only other resource to experience growth—jumping from 4% to 7% of consumers considering it as the number one resource.

The top three most used resources far outweigh all the other groups, in terms of being most valued by consumers to learn more about product information, building methods and materials and more. This makes the internet, professional consultations with contractors and the consultation of friends and family to be by far the most important resources for communicating information and interest around building materials.

In Conclusion

The data shows a clear shift in how consumers are seeking out information on home improvement projects, recommended materials and strategies for getting the most for their money. The internet is now the most important resource for both consumers and materials providers, with consultations with contractors and amongst friends and family remaining high in their levels of importance and relevance to consumers. This evidence makes clear the importance of catering to potential customers through optimized web content.

This article is based on a research study published in 2016 and includes companions to a base wave done 9 years earlier. Each study was conducted with a representative sample of 1,000 US homeowners. Care was taken when doing the second wave of the study to maintain comparability so clear identification of real trends.

A collaboration. Consumer Specialists focuses on providing insights through research that help improve marketing of products and services in the \$300 billion home improvement market. Kleber & Associates, a content marketing and advertising agency, has exclusively served the building materials market for over 30 years. The two organizations teamed up to present this significant insight into how manufacturers can better reach their audiences. Through the use of both companies resources, industry participants can build stronger businesses. Let us help you bring your brand to life.