

VALUES-DRIVEN MARKETING MEDIA INTELLIGENCE: **SOCIAL**

REVEALING UNTAPPED AUDIENCE OPPORTUNITIES IN
SOCIAL MEDIA



ALETHEIA
MARKETING & MEDIA



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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WHAT THIS RESEARCH REVEALS

Traditional media planning relies largely on demographics to reach target audiences. Our research demonstrates that a richer understanding of media preferences emerges at the **intersection of demographics and Values**, which behavioral science defines as the motivations behind consumer decision making. The overlay of a Values lens helps explain why people within the same demographic group often gravitate toward very different social platforms, or none at all.

Based on a **nationally representative sample of 4,776 U.S. adults**, this study uncovers overlooked audience opportunities, helps advertisers avoid inefficient media placements, and provides a new layer of intelligence for more effective channel selection.

- Demographics tell you where to start. **Values show you where to focus.**

- The same demographic can require very different media strategies depending on Values.
- Platform demographic stereotypes can conceal **valuable pockets of engagement**—or mistakenly presume engagement where it doesn't exist.
- **Audience-first planning** reveals opportunities that demographic targeting alone can miss.
- Values-based Media Intelligence provides **a more complete foundation for media planning.**

“Values consistently add layers of insight that demographics miss. They reveal why platform engagement can vary so widely inside the same audience segment. Values also identify where specific demographics are concentrated—often in ways that diverge from platform stereotypes.”

WHY DEMOGRAPHICS AREN'T ENOUGH

THE MISSING LAYER IN MEDIA PLANNING

The standard approach in media planning is to rely on demographics to decide where to find an audience. But demographics can be blunt tools. People within the same age, gender, or income segment often have very different interests, media habits, and platform preferences.

One explanation for why people within similar demographic segments can behave so differently is found in psychology's [Basic Human Values Theory](#). This theory argues that people hold a small set of core motivations that guide what they pay attention to, what they care about, and how they make decisions. These Values are broad, enduring intrinsic and universal drivers that influence behavior across cultures and contexts—from consumption and lifestyle choices to media habits and social behavior.

Importantly, Values are not synonymous with virtues or moral beliefs. They are not about whether someone is “good” or “bad,” and they are not a list of socially desirable traits. Instead, Values reflect what people fundamentally (and often subconsciously) prioritize.

INSIGHTS INTO ACTIONABLE STRATEGY

Values-Driven Marketing (VDM) applies this behavioral science framework to advertising and audience strategy. Rather than segmenting people only by surface-level traits like age and gender, VDM also segments audiences by the motivations that shape what feels relevant, rewarding, and emotionally compelling. This makes Values a powerful complement to demographic targeting, especially when the goal is to understand not just *who* is using a platform, but *why* certain platforms feel like a better fit for certain people, and what kinds of messages are most likely to resonate in those environments.

SIX CORE VALUETYPES

The six ValuesTypes identified as the core motivations most predictive of human behavior:

- **Achievement:** Success, status, recognition, influence, excellence, ambition, leadership
- **Pleasure:** Enjoyment, comfort, ease, convenience, indulgence, effortlessness
- **Freedom:** Autonomy, creativity, curiosity, nonconformity, self-expression, exploration
- **Purpose:** Selflessness, ethics, generosity, service, impact, social responsibility
- **Tradition:** Continuity, belonging, heritage, duty, honor, loyalty, personal responsibility
- **Security:** Safety, stability, certainty, predictability, reliability, preparedness



WHAT WE SET OUT TO UNDERSTAND

Our goal was to understand the degree to which **Values predict social media platform preference** and frequency of use. Instead of treating platforms as simply “young male” or “older female,” we aimed to uncover the motivational profile of each platform and the types of people most likely to engage most frequently. Given the shift toward audience-first targeting, we also wanted to identify which Values-driven audience segments align with which platforms.

RESEARCH DESIGN

- **Nationally representative sample:** 4,776 U.S. adults (ages 18–74)
- **Framework:** 18-item Audience Values Scale which assigns each respondent to a **ValuesType** based on the standardized mean of their strongest underlying motivational construct
- **Platforms analyzed:** 14 social media platforms
- **Platform usage measured:** Never • Rarely • Occasionally • Frequently
- **Data quality:** In-survey attention checks and post-fielding consistency checks

ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK

We analyzed the data across **three complementary layers of segmentation:**

1. Age x Gender
2. ValuesTypes
3. Age x Gender x ValuesTypes

This design allowed us to move beyond simple “Values-only” or “demographics-only” interpretations and examine how motivations and life stage jointly shape platform use. **Most importantly, it allowed us to identify who over-indexes on each platform and where there are surprising pockets of engagement that diverge from common platform stereotypes.**

INSIGHT #1

DEMOGRAPHICS STILL MATTER, BUT THEY DON'T TELL THE WHOLE STORY

Many platforms still exhibit clear demographic patterns by age and gender, making demographics an important foundation for media planning. However, demographic trends alone do not explain why engagement varies so dramatically among people who appear similar on the surface. **Values consistently provide an additional layer of insight into where audiences are most engaged.**

POWER USERS BY DEMO & VALUETYPE

PLATFORM	CORE DEMOGRAPHIC	DOMINANT VALUE
 TikTok	 18-34 Female	 Achievement
 Pinterest	 18-34 Female	 Freedom
 LinkedIn	 25-44 Male	 Achievement
 Nextdoor	 55-74 Female	 Security
 Reddit	 25-44 Male	 Freedom
 Facebook	 45-64 Female	 Pleasure

Shown are the demographic segments and ValuesTypes with the highest index scores for the "use frequently" response on each selected social media platform (N = 4,776).

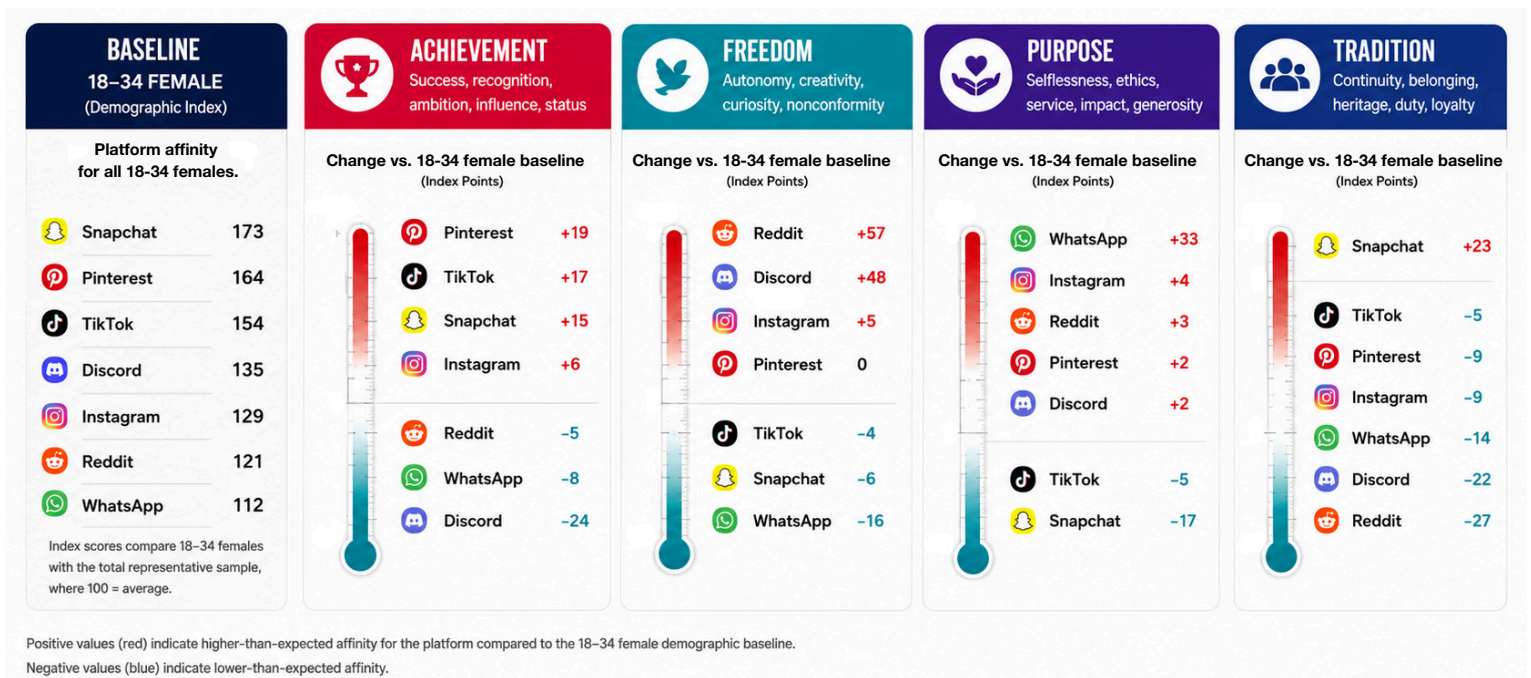
INSIGHT #2

THE SAME DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE CAN REQUIRE COMPLETELY DIFFERENT MEDIA STRATEGIES

To demonstrate the benefits of incorporating Values into media planning, we identified where each Values x demographic audience segment over or under-indexed on platform affinity across major social media channels.

The table below shows baseline index scores comparing platform use frequency among women ages 18–34 with the total sample. Each subsequent ValuesType panel shows the positive or negative deviation from that baseline when Values are layered onto the demographic segment. Positive values indicate higher-than-expected platform affinity; negative values indicate lower-than-expected affinity.

VALUES SEGMENTS REVEAL HIDDEN AUDIENCES



INSIGHT #3

VALUES REVEAL HIDDEN POCKETS OF ENGAGEMENT

We looked for pockets of engagement that stood out in the dataset, where a segment over-indexed on a platform in a non-stereotypical way, or where a particular ValuesType showed meaningfully higher (or lower) engagement than others within the same demographic cohort. **These patterns represent opportunities for advertisers to adjust their media mix in strategic ways**, either to capture more of a specific target audience or to redirect spend in order to reduce media waste.

18–34 Female Freedom Types and Discord

Although Discord is typically considered a young, male platform, this is a high-affinity pocket for 18–34 female Freedom types that would be easy to overlook with demographic targeting alone.

45–64 Female Pleasure Types and TikTok

Not surprisingly, women 45–64 are less likely than average to be on TikTok. However, when examined across Values, Pleasure-oriented women 45–64 look a lot more like 25–44 year-olds when it comes to time spent on TikTok.

55–74 Males and Females and Nextdoor

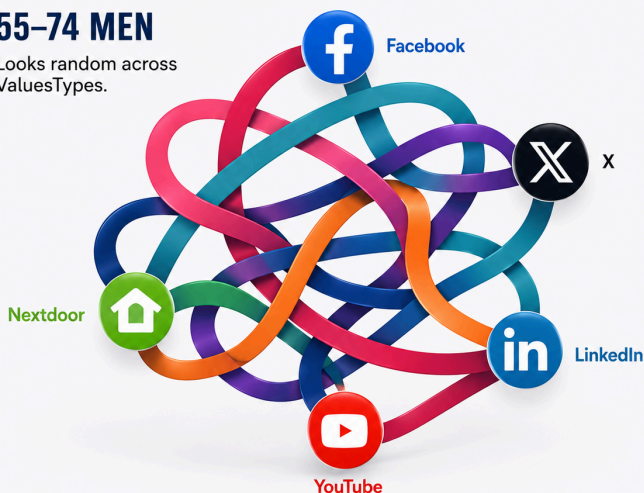
Women 55–74 over-index across all ValuesTypes for Nextdoor; for men 55–74, it was Security types only. This suggests Nextdoor's heaviest engagement is anchored in older women, but there is also a niche male segment that is highly aligned with the platform.

INSIGHT #4

WITHOUT VALUES

55-74 MEN

Looks random across ValuesTypes.



VALUES ORGANIZE WHAT DEMOGRAPHICS CANNOT

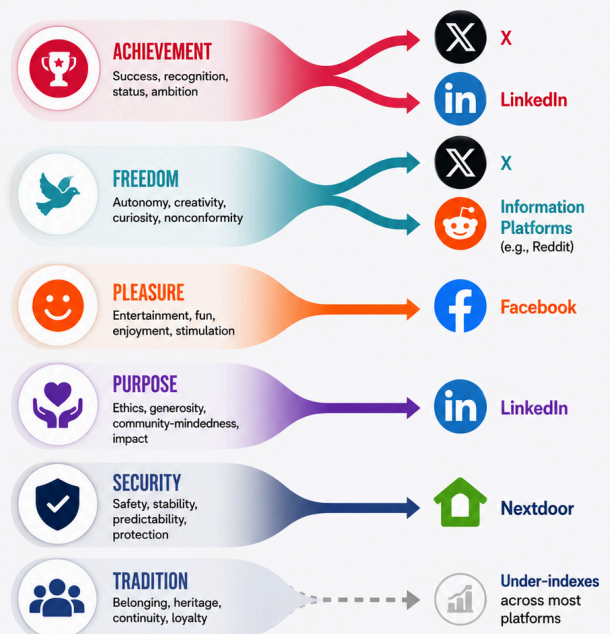
People who look similar on paper often consume media very differently. This study demonstrated that **Values reveal meaningful patterns of channel affinity within demographic groups**, offering advertisers an additional layer of media intelligence for channel selection.

By understanding where different ValuesTypes within particular age x gender segments are concentrated, **marketers can make more informed channel decisions than they could by relying on demographic assumptions alone.** This type of Values-informed media planning shifts investment toward the media environments most likely to reach their target audiences. When also combined with Values-aligned creative and messaging, the result is even stronger audience alignment, more efficient media investment, and reduced ad waste.

WITH VALUES

55-74 MEN

Values reveal clear platform preferences within this demographic.





WHAT THIS MEANS FOR MARKETERS

This analysis reinforces two truths: First, demographics still matter. Many platforms have clear skews by age and gender, and those patterns remain important for reach planning. Second, Values consistently add a missing layer of insight, revealing why platform engagement varies so widely within the same demographic group. Segmenting by Values highlights where specific motivations are concentrated, often in ways that diverge from platform stereotypes.

TWO WAYS TO APPLY VALUES-BASED MEDIA INTELLIGENCE

1 SMARTER PLATFORM SELECTION

Rather than buying broadly against a demographic label, prioritize media environments where your desired motivational audience is disproportionately concentrated.

2 STRONGER CREATIVE ALIGNMENT

Align message, tone, imagery, and spokesperson style to the primary Values held by your target audience, improving the likelihood that creative feels emotionally relevant.

Together, audience intelligence and Values-based media intelligence help marketers place the right message in the environments where it is most likely to resonate.



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CURIOUS ABOUT WHAT MOTIVATES YOUR AUDIENCE?

LET'S CONNECT ABOUT A VALUES STUDY TO
IMPROVE YOUR TARGETING

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