	Source / Medium	Acquisition		
		Sessions ↓	% New Sessions	New Users
		186,846 % of Total: 100.00% (186,846)	44.96% Avg for View: 44.90% (0.15%)	84,012 % of Total: 100.15% (83,890)
1.	Google / organic	66,214 (35.44%)	69.07%	45,735 (54.44%)
2.	m.facebook.com / referral	51,273 (27.44%)	17.63%	9,040 (10.76%)
3.	(direct) / (none)	25,840 (13.83%)	64.61%	16,694 (19.87%)
4.	facebook.com / referral	8,117 (4.34%)	28.52%	2,315 (2.76%)
5.	t.co / referral	8,063 (4.32%)	33.39%	2,692 (3.20%)
6.	Bing / organic	1,808 (0.97%)	71.79%	1,298 (1.55%)
7.	lm.facebook.com / referral	1,643 (0.88%)	40.29%	662 (0.79%)
8.	Monday E, Oct 16 / email	1,578 (0.84%)	14.26%	225 (0.27%)
9.	Yahoo / organic	1,492 (0.80%)	69.17%	1,032 (1.23%)
10.	l.facebook.com / referral	1,413 (0.76%)	36.66%	518 (0.62%)

This screenshot from Google Analytics shows a significant portion of the traffic to this website comes from Facebook, especially the mobile version. The source called "Direct" captures people who went directly to the website; "Google/organic" indicates traffic that came to the site as a result of a keyword search.

Source: Google Analytics, https://analytics.google.com/analytics/web/#report/trafficsources-all-traffic/a35535656w63365892p65008914/%3F_u.date00%3D20171001%26_u.date01%3D20171031/ (accessed December 8, 2017).

ETHICS IN ACTION

DISTURBING ONLINE CONTENT

The web's capacity for interactivity gives producers more control over how to make graphic images, video or sound accessible to the user. On the web, you can go far beyond the kind of warning that's typical in television news; you can actually require your audience to take action in order to view a particular photo or watch a video. You can offer links to photo or video files on your site or any other with an explanation of what the user will see; presumably the user will read this before clicking on the link. With this technique, you are allowing the audience to make an informed decision about viewing the graphic images. And you can provide access to content that you would never print or put on the air.

Using the web in this way may not always be appropriate. As in every ethical dilemma, there will be those who offer counter opinions. If the journalistic purpose is not strong enough to warrant publishing a photo or airing a video clip, is it strong enough to justify posting the content

online? Should your standards for publication be different for online versus on the air or in the paper? Arguments can be made on both sides. However, it may help to remember that you should be accountable to your audience and that ethical decision making is about coming up with defensible answers.

News organizations should discuss the issues and be prepared to share with the public what went into their decisions—ideally through a formal statement published alongside the disturbing content or informally with members of the public who might contact the news organization about the decisions made.

USER-GENERATED CONTENT

User-generated content (UGC) is exactly what it sounds like. It is news and information produced by people who use the medium or service to which they are contributing. Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn and Twitter are all examples of user-generated content sites. Newsrooms now routinely rely on user-generated content for story ideas or as elements within daily news stories.

For example, one study looked at how journalists from BBC World News integrated user-generated content into their reports on the conflict in Syria. More than half of the 35 video news stories analyzed opened with a user-generated clip.[7]

Jennifer Hoppenstedt, an executive producer for news and social media at WLS-TV in Chicago, sees UGC as helping the station improve the quality of its journalism by connecting people in the community to each other.

"This story came from our Facebook page: an 89-year-old Popsicle vendor had a daughter who died, leaving him two grandsons to raise. The story took off, and we started reporting it on all platforms. A GoFundMe raised about $400,000 [for the grandfather]," said Hoppenstedt.

Sometimes UGC is nothing more than a story tip and sometimes it's a piece of video that illustrates the horrors of war, but as we discussed in Chapter 5, journalists using UGC must verify the source and accuracy of the information before reporting it. Often, digital producers are required to vet UGC in addition to obtaining the rights and permission to use the content, as well as determining how the creator should be credited or, in some cases, paid.

Crowdsourcing

Another form of UGC is crowdsourcing, which the Online Journalism Review defines as "the use of a large group of readers to report a news story." Crowdsourcing brings multiple pieces of information together to produce a complete story. Crowdsourcing is often described as "pro-am" journalism, because it's the result of a collaboration between professionals and amateurs.

News organizations have used crowdsourcing to cover breaking news stories like severe weather and election fraud. The Washington Post, for example, relied on crowdsourcing to track clean-up efforts after a massive blizzard. Readers were invited to send updates from their neighborhoods that the newsroom then plotted on an online map.

TRADE TOOLS

USER-GENERATED CONTENT

Hurricane Katrina Then and Now

In the five years since Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast, some areas have rebuilt while others remain unchanged. CNN photographers and iReporters collaborated in a powerful past-meets-present photography project to show what the region looks like today.

CNN iReport

COURTESY CONRAD WYRE III

09/05/2005

NEW ORLEANS AREA

Hollygrove

MISSISSIPPI GULF COAST

Failed levees caused flooding across Hollygrove in Katrina's aftermath. September 2005 & July 2010.

"As my wife and I took these photos we really noticed that nothing has really changed in New Orleans since the storm hit five years ago."

Conrad Wyre III
Harvey, Louisiana

1 of 31

Source: "Hurricane Katrina Then and Now," CNN.com, http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2010/katrina.five.years/interactive/then.and.now/index.html?hpt=Mid (accessed January 3, 2014).

The AP's Eric Carvin, Texas Tribune's Amanda Zamora and Katie Hawkins-Gaar, in her role with CNN's iReport, pulled together some excellent advice for anyone hoping to do a better job with content contributed by the audience. In true UGC style, they crowdsourced many of the best ideas from the journalism community at large. Here are their top five tips:

1. Job one is to get it right. Josh Stearns, a so-called verification junkie, has curated some tools and apps for fact-checking social media on his blog, verificationjunkie.com. The Knight Foundation's Jennifer Preston suggests using Twitter's advanced search function to narrow tweets by geography and other parameters that can help you vet the content.
2. Build a community first. Jareen Imam, head of social media at CBS News, says it helps to create relationships with communities before you need them. It's also important to think about the way you ask for contributions, especially when you're dealing with people following a traumatic event. Don't just say, "Hey, folks, give us stuff"—instead you might try, "We want to hear your stories and give you a platform to express your view."
3. Reward contributors. News organizations have to make it worth the audience's effort. Instead of rewarding people with money, you create a way to say thank you, by showing the participants what their contributions led to. For example, NPR created an app that pinpointed accessible playgrounds for children with disabilities, and built into the app was a way for the public to identify more playgrounds and to share photos and other valuable information with those most interested in the issue.
4. Know what you're asking. Before you ask contributors to send in a specific type of content, try it yourself—you'll figure out what actually works and what doesn't. Facebook's Dorinne Mendoza says the more boundaries you set and the more specific you can get about what you want, the more creativity you'll get from the audience. For example, iReport's "Hurricane Katrina Then and Now" required a lot more effort than they first thought, since they were asking photographers to "line up the old photo with the present-day view, linking the past and present in one frame." The very strict guidelines led to a more powerful project.
5. Tap into people's passions. PBS received more than 1,000 responses when they asked Phish fans to share their reasons for investing in the group's music. The late Steve Buttry also suggested that news organizations "prime the pump"—especially for "the albatross of annual stories" such as Mother's Day or Halloween—and simply let people tell their own stories.

The Guardian newspaper in London used crowdsourcing in a different way, when it asked readers to help review a massive public release of formerly classified documents detailing five years of expense claims from every member of Parliament. About 20,000 volunteers weighed in, helping the newspaper find and report the biggest scoops quickly.

Deborah Acosta, a video journalist for the New York Times, says social media has made crowdsourcing easier and more effective than ever. She points to a terrorist attack in Paris as a good example.

"At the moment that it happened, you know we're not on the ground there, we don't know what's going on, but we do know that we can go on Instagram or go on Facebook or on Twitter or on Snapchat and see what people are sharing in that moment and then get a lot of clues about what it is that's going on and contact those people directly and be like, 'Hey, where are you? What are you doing? What is going on?'"

For the Paris story, Acosta used Instagram to find an important eyewitness. "I saw a post from a guy hiding in a café nearby, literally in the moment that it occurred, and I'm texting with him. This guy in Paris that has just run from this theater because of what just had happened. And he's telling me what's going on and he's safe. He's in a café. He's going to head back home. He's going to send me photos," Acosta said. "That is so powerful to be able to do. Otherwise, how am I going to find out what's going on down there? To be able to connect with someone via Instagram, that's on the ground in a café experiencing it that moment; that's the power of social media."

When New York Times journalist Deborah Acosta found a trash bag full of Kodachrome slides, she enlisted the news outlet's audience on Facebook to figure out where the images came from. Acosta live-streamed her reporting process and, through crowdsourcing comments, she discovered the slides were the work of a former Newsweek reporter Mariana Gosnell, who had died several years earlier. Acosta produced a video incorporating clips from the live streams and the audience comments, ultimately answering the question of why the slides had been abandoned.

Source: "Fragments of a Life: A Curbside Mystery," nytimes.com, https://www.nytimes.com/video/multimedia/100000004526979/fragments-of-a-life-a-curbside-mystery.html (accessed December 8, 2017).

Comments

If interactivity is one of the biggest advantages of digital media, it also raises some thorny issues. Most news websites encourage readers to weigh in by making it easy for them to add comments to online stories. The vast majority of users don't write comments, but they apparently do like to read what others have said. When Steve Semelsberger ran Pluck, a company that provided social media tools to newspapers, he found comments could increase page views by up to 15 percent.[8] But comments can be offensive and discussions can degenerate into hate speech, putting the news organization in the precarious position of appearing to condone those comments. As a result, some newsrooms have turned off web comments entirely. NPR disabled comments after users complained they were rife with "moronic, un-illuminating observations and petty insults," as one person put it.[9]

Most news organizations use software to automatically filter out comments that include specific words, such as obscenities and ethnic or racial slurs. Some have learned the hard way that they must also apply the filter to usernames. It's also important to let users know what kinds of comments will not be permitted, either in a "terms of service" statement or a note on every page. For example, here's what The Kansas City Star says: "Lively, open, civil debate is the goal. Please refrain from personal attacks or comments that are racist, vulgar or otherwise inappropriate."

No matter how stringent filters are, distasteful comments can slip through. Most news sites enlist the help of readers to flag or "report as abuse" any comments they find objectionable. The site's editors can then remove comments that violate the terms of use. Some news organizations have set up software to remove a comment automatically if it's been flagged by a certain number of users. And some will ban users who repeatedly violate the site's standards.

Many sites require users to register before they can post comments. Some have found that using Facebook Connect for comments has kept exchanges more civil, because peoples' posts are tied to users' real names. Some sites require all comments to be screened by an editor before posting. Depending on the popularity of the site, that can be a huge undertaking. Many sites charge editors and reporters with reviewing comments on stories after they have been posted and arranging to remove any that violate the terms of service.

ETHICS IN ACTION

NATIVE ADVERTISING

Most traditional media have strict policies regarding the presentation of advertising content. Many television stations air "infomercials"—programs devoted to promoting some product or service to the viewers. On the print side, there are "advertorials"—advertisements that are designed to look like a news article or editorial regularly published in the paper. In both cases, this content should be clearly labelled, although in practice the disclosure may not appear throughout the program, or be printed in very small type.

On the web, the line between news and advertising is even blurrier. Native advertising is content that is deliberately designed to match the style of the platform it appears on. When The Atlantic magazine ran an online advertorial by the Church of Scientology, its header read "Sponsored Content," but the headline style and typeface mimicked the site's news content. In an unusual move, The Atlantic allowed the ad to include a comments section; the first comments posted praised the controversial church. A social media backlash forced the magazine to take the ad down less than 12 hours after it was posted. "We screwed up," editors said. "There's a certain amount of subterfuge implicit in the idea of advertorial content," said Edward Wasserman, dean of the University of California at Berkeley's graduate school of journalism. "Advertisers wouldn't do it if it didn't convey greater authority and persuasiveness" than a typical ad.[10]

The American Society of Magazine Editors suggests this guideline: "On all online pages, there shall be a clear distinction made—through words, design, placement, or any other effective method—between editorial and advertising content." The Federal Trade Commission, which regulates deceptive advertising, says a label that states "sponsored content" or "paid advertising" can make clear an online story is an ad.