The Global State of Reader Engagement

Discovery & Engagement in a Mobile-first World

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Discovery & Engagement in a Mobile-first World

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#ONA18
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ABOUT US

We enable meaningful stories to thrive — wherever they live

700 enterprise publishers
80% of the top US pubs
65 Countries
6 Continents

The Washington Post
CNN
Clarín
The Atlantic
Le Monde
UOL
The New York Times
Critical moment:
In news and media, mobile has now firmly surpassed desktop

2017 – 2018

Desktop
Double-digit declines

Mobile
Double-digit growth
We’ll investigate two key areas in a mobile-first world

- Referral sources and discovery
- Engagement on page and over time
A reversal in the largest sources of traffic
Facebook traffic has steadily declined and is now **down nearly 40%** versus January 2017
Google Search on mobile has grown **more than 2x** since January 2017.
Direct mobile traffic has steadily grown by more than 30%
What might a declining Facebook mean for publishers?
August 3, 2018: Facebook down for 45 minutes

What happened to news consumption?
Users switched to Direct and Search as discovery mechanisms

Overall traffic up **2.3%**

Direct up **11%**, driven by app increase of **22%**

Search up **8%**
Shifts outside of the big three traffic sources
Top traditional referrers — Twitter, Yahoo, Outbrain — were roughly constant throughout the last 20 months.
REFERRERS

Flipboard

Up 2x in the last year

Now a larger mobile referrer than Yahoo and Outbrain
Google News

Replaced Google Play Newsstand in May

Has grown substantially since it relaunched
Google Chrome Suggestions

Has grown 20x in the past year

Now as large a traffic source as Twitter
1. Are we in a post-social world when it comes to referred traffic? What will come next?

2. The Google ecosystem is by far the dominant traffic source on mobile

3. Direct on mobile is important, and growing

4. Up and coming: mobile “portals”
Engagement differences between devices
Three metrics for homepage engagement:

- scroll
- engaged time
- click-through rate
Mobile homepage visitors scroll to view **25%** of the page, compared to **34%** for desktop.
... but, they engage for 40% longer and are 20% more likely to click

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Desktop</th>
<th>Mobile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Engaged Time</td>
<td>16s</td>
<td>22s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average CTR</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A collaboration with Nir Grinberg of Northeastern University looked at types of reading behavior and identified six types of readers.

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Bounce backs  No engagement before quickly leaving the page
Idle
Shallow
Scanners
Readers
Long readers
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bounce backs</th>
<th>ENGAGEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Idle</strong></td>
<td>High time on page, but very low engaged time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shallow</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
ENGAGEMENT

Bounce backs

Idle

Shallow

Scanners

Readers

Long readers

Minimal (but non-zero) engagement
ENGAGEMENT

Bounce backs

Idle

Shallow

Scanners

Readers

Long readers

Deep scroll, but at speeds substantially faster than true reading
ENGAGEMENT

Bounce backs

Idle

Shallow

Scanners

Readers

Long readers

Deep scroll and engagement
ENGAGEMENT

Bounce backs
Idle
Shallow
Scanners
Readers

Long readers

Very deep scroll and engagement
Scaling this analysis across our network, we saw notable differences between mobile and desktop reading behavior.
Low quality engagement patterns are quite different between devices

**Mobile visitors**
More likely to bounce back or have shallow visits

**Desktop visitors**
More likely to be idle
High quality reading is quite similar between mobile and desktop.
Is past reading behavior predictive of subsequent reading?
Readers are likely to exhibit the same behavior on their next visit
**ENGAGEMENT**

Readers are 54% more likely to read again next time

Long readers are 59% more likely to read again

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>bounce back</th>
<th>idle</th>
<th>shallow</th>
<th>scan</th>
<th>read</th>
<th>read long</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bounce back</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>idle</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shallow</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scan</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>read</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>read long</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>39</td>
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But, **low quality visitors** are much less likely to later become **readers**.
App visitors are **5.7x** more loyal than platform visitors

<table>
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<th>Traffic Source</th>
<th>Mobile Weekly Visits</th>
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<tr>
<td>Direct, web</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google Search</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chrome Suggestions</td>
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<td>Twitter</td>
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And, amazingly, mobile visitors exhibit **more loyalty** across the board.

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IN SUM

1. Content discovery is changing
   • Social is no longer the main way mobile visitors read
   • Google Search and Direct traffic are the largest sources of traffic

2. There is a new class of referrers emerging
   • Mobile portals are the fastest growing segment of referrers

3. Mobile readers are equally (or even more) engaged, and more loyal
   • The mobile reading experience is different: are we doing enough?
Thank you.
Google traffic to AMP pages has grown much faster than to non-AMP and AMP is now in the majority.

But non-AMP sites have grown in 2018 as well.