

Time to lay these digital publishing myths to rest

 By [Pierre Cassuto](#)

21 Jul 2014

Digital publishing and advertising is a sophisticated, high-tech industry where we have an array of statistics and metrics at our fingertips, thanks to the wealth of data we collect in ad-serving systems, web analytics tools and other digital systems.

Yet, even though we have access to hard numbers that disprove them, a range of common sense myths prevail and lead many marketers and publishers to make bad decisions when selling and purchasing inventory. Here are four widely held beliefs about digital publishing that are at once completely intuitive and utterly wrong.

The click is the commodity

Even now, with a variety of other metrics at their disposal, publishers still attach an inordinate amount of value on the number of clicks their stories attract and use these clicks from unique readers as their major selling point for advertising. But the assumption that a click means the user is engaging with the content is fatally flawed.

Data from real-time analytics firm [Chartbeat](#) shows that less than 50% of people who click on a link hang around long enough to engage with it in any meaningful manner. As a publisher, you should be focusing on dwell time instead - on getting users to read, share and comment on your content.

As an advertiser, you should remember that deeper engagement with editorial means a greater chance for engagement with your ads. Look for deeply engaged, qualified audiences that are a match to your target market rather than chasing impressions and unique users. After all, someone that bounces as soon as they click on a link won't have time to interact with your ad.

Above the fold is the best spot for your ad

Advertisers fight for the banner at the top of the page, believing it to be the prime spot. Guess what? As soon as a user lands on the Web page, he or she will usually scroll down past the top banner to the headline right away.

Stats from Chartbeat show that content that is below the fold gets two thirds of the user's attention. The best placements, therefore, are those in the midst of the content below the fold.

The homepage is the most important page

As publishers, we often look to our homepage as the most iconic and important design on our site. We agonise over this one specific design, all too often giving it priority over our actual content pages. After all, impressive front pages are how newspapers get sold, right? Unfortunately, this reasoning doesn't carry over to online news.

The percentage of overall traffic landing on homepages of online publications is getting smaller and smaller as SEO and social referral are becoming larger sources of traffic for online publishers. This means that, with a few exceptions, the majority of traffic lands not on publishers' homepages but directly on content pages. Many publishers have started updating their sites to improve link density and related content to reduce bounce rates and make every content page to start feeling like a homepage.

Content with the most shares is the most popular

Many publishers and journalists are proud when their stories generate buzz on social media channels. But before you get

to excited about a story that generated hundreds of Facebook likes or Twitter tweets, it's worth looking more closely at the impressions and engagement the article got from your readers.

You'll often find that your most popular pieces actually were not that popular on social media, while those that spread around Facebook or Twitter didn't bring that much quality traffic to your website. The harsh truth here is that many people share stuff on social media without bothering to read it. The research from Chartbeat and our own experience shows no correlation between how many readers a piece attracted and the time they spent on it, and how much it was shared in social media.

Closing words

Digital marketers and publishers are as susceptible to following common-sense prejudices as professionals from other industries. As these four myths above highlight, we can improve performance of digital publishing and advertising when we pay close attention to what real-world data tells us, even when it seems counterintuitive.

ABOUT PIERRE CASSUTO

Humanz is one of the world's fastest growing AI companies focused on empowering valuable creators and the marketers that work with them. Each day, Humanz analyzes hundreds of millions of social media profiles and content pieces as well as transaction data from online merchants, to generate better benchmarks and predictions for social commerce ROI, while also improving transparency, motivation and access for creators and marketers.

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