

How Engaged Is Traffic From Social Sites?

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Web users who follow links from social sites are less interested in their content

Person-to-person sharing has become a major way content producers hope to have their information disseminated as social media has offered the chance for content to go viral.

Despite studies that suggest email is still the top way people share content, and that search is still the top way people find websites, social sharing“newer and more exciting”is in the spotlight.

According to data from Outbrain, just over 10% of external referrals are from social media sites, compared with approximately 41% from search and nearly a third from other content sites.

Referrals from social sites fall overwhelmingly into a few content categories. Social media users are eager to share“and click on”news and entertainment stories, which account for nearly three-quarters of all social media referrals.

Industry watchers have posited that one reason for social sharing getting so much attention from the media is their outsize impact on media websites.

Significantly, Outbrain also found social media referrals were less engaged than those from search or other content sites. They had fewer page views per session and a higher bounce rate.

Outbrain also developed a definition of a “hyperengaged reader” as one who views at least five pages per session. Social media referrals were less than half as likely to be hyperengaged as referrals from content sites or search.

The Outbrain report suggested that content site referrals were already in reading mode, ready to consume more content, and search referrals were actively looking for information, making them naturally engaged.

Social media site users, by contrast, make up fewer referrals to content pages, and those who do click are less engaged.

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