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CONTENT MARKETING

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EIGHT WAYS CONSUMERS ARE ENGAGING
WITH DIGITAL CONTENT TODAY AND
WHAT IT MEANS FOR MARKETERS

KEY FINDINGS:

THERE ARE EIGHT WAYS CONSUMERS ENGAGE WITH CONTENT ONLINE

Content marketing is most effective when campaigns are aligned with consumer motivations.

CONTENT EXPERIENCES ARE DEFINED BY FOUR DIMENSIONS

When engaging with content, the consumer experience covers topics, motivations, emotions and outcomes.

THERE'S A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONTENT AND CONTENT MOMENTS

Selecting the right combinations of topics, formats and audience groups will drive more relevant content experiences.

CONTENT EXPERIENCES IN NON-ENDEMIC ENVIRONMENTS CAN DRIVE EFFECTIVE RESULTS

Marketers can break through the digital clutter by engaging with consumers in spaces that are less crowded and less expensive.



INTRODUCTION

Marketers have always been storytellers, leveraging television commercials, magazine advertisements or a range of other formats to push out their messages. While the combination of powerful copy and clever design has reigned since the golden days of Madison Avenue, there are now more ways than ever before to engage consumers through richer, more relevant and deeply engaging content. As defined by the Content Marketing Institute, content marketing is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly-defined audience—and, ultimately to drive profitable customer action.

But consumer behavior—especially as it relates to digital content consumption—has disrupted traditional content marketing approaches. The democratization of content creation, largely driven by technology, has empowered consumers to make decisions on their own terms. Content discovery is organic, and consumers choose whether to engage through a tap, click or swipe, often within a split second and frequently on-the-go.

Content Marketing: Eight Ways Consumers are Engaging with Content Today and What It Means for Marketers reveals the critical moments where consumers engage with digital content in order to shed light on a new approach to content marketing. Marketers will gain a robust understanding of the motivations that *drive* a person to engage with different types of content. We refer to these opportunities for engagement as “content moments.”

From social to native, branded video to gaming, content marketing done well has the power to transform the conversation between brands and consumers. The most successful content marketing programs are those that engage with the consumer in their moment. This report shows you how to get there.

EFFECTIVE CONTENT MARKETING PROGRAMS WILL NOT ONLY CONSIDER WHAT TYPE OF PERSON CONSUMES CONTENT, BUT ALSO WHAT DRIVES A PERSON TO ENGAGE WITH DIFFERENT TYPES OF CONTENT.

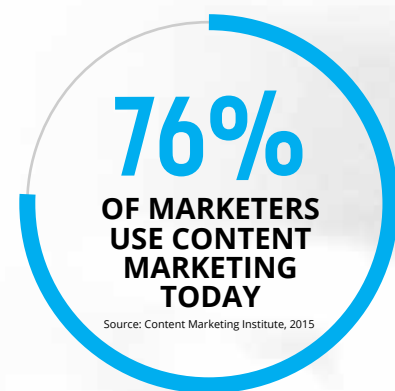
CONTENT MARKETING: TODAY'S CHALLENGES

Consumers are spending more time than ever with their digital devices. In the United States, total digital media consumption across all devices has increased by 157% from 2010 to 2014.¹ And what are they doing on their devices? The average person spends 11 hours and 5 minutes of each day engaging with media.²

Marketers are capitalizing on the opportunity to engage with consumers through content. In fact, 76% of marketers use content marketing today, and a majority of all U.S. marketers planned to increase their content marketing investments in the past year.³ Yet, only 37% of marketers describe their content marketing strategies as "sophisticated" or "mature," and 38% of marketers claim their content marketing is "effective."³

Major challenges persist for content marketers, and they are multiplied by increasing digital complexity. Over half of marketers (56%) cite "Producing Engaging Content" as the top challenge for content marketing, followed closely by "Measuring Content Effectiveness" and "Measuring ROI."³ Creating content can also be an expensive and time-consuming endeavor. And with nearly 76% of marketers producing content, competition is fierce. As a result, marketers are looking for ways to break through the clutter with content that is relevant to consumers in the right ways, at the right time.

In order to succeed, a strong understanding of why consumers use and engage with content is necessary. However, there's surprisingly little data that can guide marketers in the pre-campaign process before they invest in designing, creating and launching campaigns. Only 49% of brands use data to select topics that better appeal to their audience before producing the content.⁴



ONLY 37% OF MARKETERS
DESCRIBE THEIR CONTENT
MARKETING STRATEGIES AS
"SOPHISTICATED" OR
"MATURE," AND 38% CLAIM
THEY ARE "EFFECTIVE."

Source: Content Marketing Institute, 2015

METHODOLOGY:

AOL Insights analyzed 7,300 "content moments," defined as an occasion when a person engages with a specific form of content, such as an article, video or blog post. Data revealed eight content segments that drive all consumer moments with digital content in the United States. Each piece of content fits into one type of content segment, and the segments are mutually exclusive and exhaustive. For more information on the methodology, see Appendix.

WHAT MAKES UP A CONTENT MOMENT

Each of the eight content segments revealed in the research comprises four aspects—or dimensions—that represent how the consumer engages with digital content.



BEFORE [TOPIC AND MOTIVATIONS]

The consumer comes across the content because of a specific **motivation** or **topic** interest. For example, for a consumer waiting for the bus, the motivation of boredom is prompting him to read an article on his mobile phone.



DURING [EMOTIONS]

While engaging, consumers experience **emotions** driven by the content.











AFTER [OUTCOMES]

After consumption, they leave the moment feeling a particular way (**outcome**), whether it's "primed for action" after reading an inspiring listicle, or "replenished" after watching an entertaining video.

EIGHT CONTENT SEGMENTS

CONTENT SEGMENT KEY

Topics: What content topics (such as sports or health) fall within this particular content segment?
Motivations: What made the consumer want to engage with this content? What was he looking to get out of the experience?
Emotions: How did the consumer feel while engaging with the content?
Outcomes: What did the consumer do after engaging with the content?

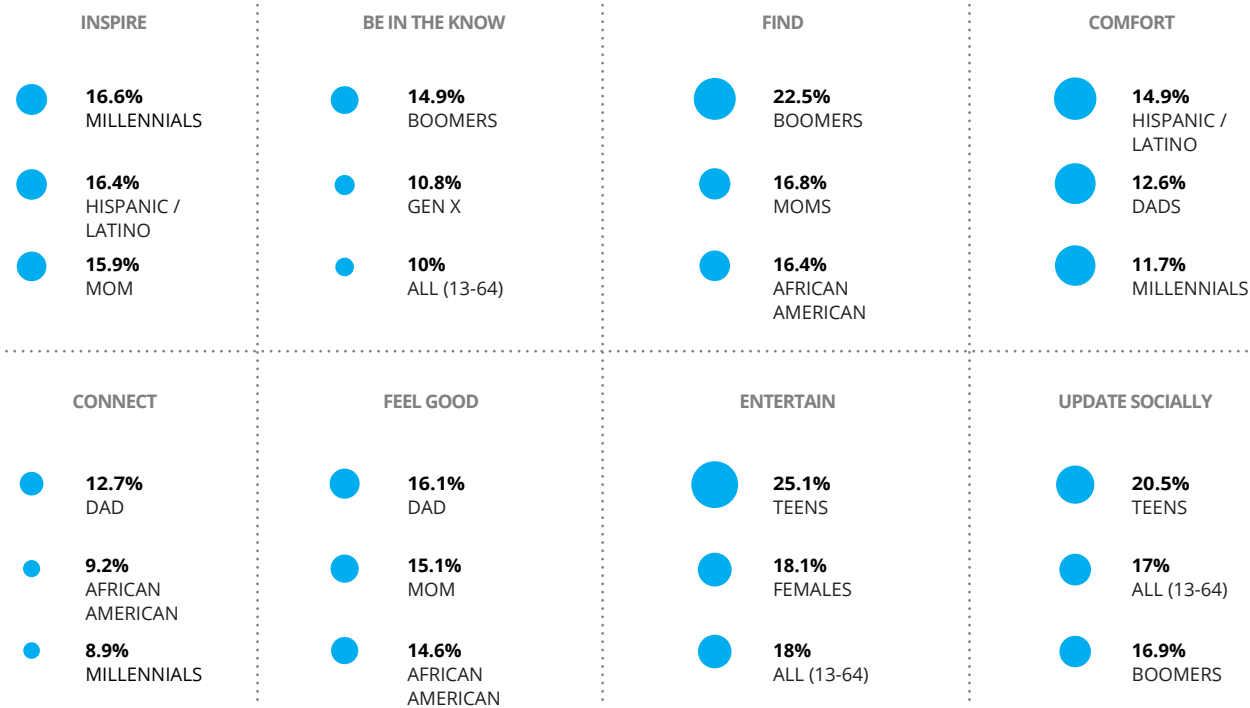
	TOPICS	MOTIVATIONS	EMOTIONS	OUTCOMES	EXAMPLE
 <p>INSPIRE 15% OF ALL ONLINE CONTENT MOMENTS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food, home, fashion, technology, travel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeking fresh ideas, ready to try something new or think about something from a different angle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relaxed and inspired 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primed for further action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A consumer moves into a new apartment and is looking for interior design ideas to decorate. A photo gallery with beautiful home decorations makes him feel inspired, and he's ready to get started.
 <p>BE IN THE KNOW 10% OF ALL ONLINE CONTENT MOMENTS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weather, current events, politics, social issues, finance, business news 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeking relevant ideas, staying updated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conflicted, frustrated and focused 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Armed with information, feeling in the know 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A new bill is in review at the state's highest courts. A concerned citizen reads about the latest developments on her mobile phone while commuting to work. Although conflicted, she has a better understanding of the bill's implications.
 <p>FIND 16% OF ALL ONLINE CONTENT MOMENTS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health and wellness, technology, personal finance, home, food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeking answers, looking to research something specific, learn something new, get new ideas and get support/advice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On track, focused and motivated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ready to act, armed with practical information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A consumer is in-market for a new smartphone. Her go-to tech blog provides a comparison of the most popular devices. She uses that information to make a decision.
 <p>COMFORT 7% OF ALL ONLINE CONTENT MOMENTS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educational and documentary, family and parenting, personal finance, medical, social issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeking support and insight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tense, frustrated and anxious 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feeling a better sense of understanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A college student is nearing graduation and looking for a job. As he searches for blog posts on interview tips, he feels tense and frustrated, but when he comes across an article illustrating other new grads feeling the same way, he ultimately feels more at ease.
 <p>CONNECT 5% OF ALL ONLINE CONTENT MOMENTS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comedy, technology, drama, movies, food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeking visual, buzzy content that aids in the learning of something new or getting ideas, feel part of a community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have an energizing lift, happy and excited 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ready to share the content that entertained, made them feel happy, or improved their mood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A consumer overhears his friends talking about a political figure's latest gaffe, which has now gone viral. He watches the video to join in on the conversation.
 <p>FEEL GOOD 12% OF ALL ONLINE CONTENT MOMENTS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Music, sports, movies, kids, animals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeking a heartwarming moment that can improve mood and instill a sense of relaxation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feel an emotional lift or makes them feel happy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leave feeling cheered, inspired and happy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A consumer is feeling stressed and is looking for something to cheer her up. She watches videos on baby animals for an emotional lift.
 <p>ENTERTAIN 18% OF ALL ONLINE CONTENT MOMENTS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comedy, animals, music, television drama 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeking an amusing escape to relax, take a mental break and a mood improvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feel great, relaxed and happy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feel replenished, feel entertained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> After a grueling day at the office, a consumer goes online to watch the latest episode of his favorite web series, making him feel better and serving as a distraction until the next work day.
 <p>UPDATE SOCIALLY 17% OF ALL ONLINE CONTENT MOMENTS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sports, celebrity, current events, movies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeking relaxing info that will keep them updated on what's going on, allow them to relax, or take a mental break 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have a fun release 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exit moment with a mental and emotional reset 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In between meetings, a consumer takes a break to scroll through her social feeds and see what those in her social network are up to. Feeling refreshed, she's able to get back to work.

CONTENT SEGMENTS VARY BY AUDIENCE GROUP, TOO

Another factor to consider is the target audience. Clear patterns illustrate that specific audience groups are more likely to consume content in specific moments.

AUDIENCE GROUPS & CONTENT SEGMENTS

HIGHEST RESONATING SEGMENTS FOR EACH AUDIENCE GROUP



When we compare COMFORT moments against demographics, we see that millennials, dads and Hispanics are much more likely to consume content aligned with this moment. Marketers can tailor this content to these audience groups to maximize investments.

If a marketer is looking to reach millennials, INSPIRE content is more likely to drive engagement compared to BE IN THE KNOW content, which indexes much lower than the rest of the segments.

SELECTING THE RIGHT COMBINATIONS OF TOPICS, FORMATS AND AUDIENCE GROUPS WILL DRIVE MORE RELEVANT CONTENT EXPERIENCES.

THE PORTFOLIO APPROACH

WE HAVE TAPPED INTO FIVE IMPORTANT INSIGHTS OF CONTENT MARKETING:

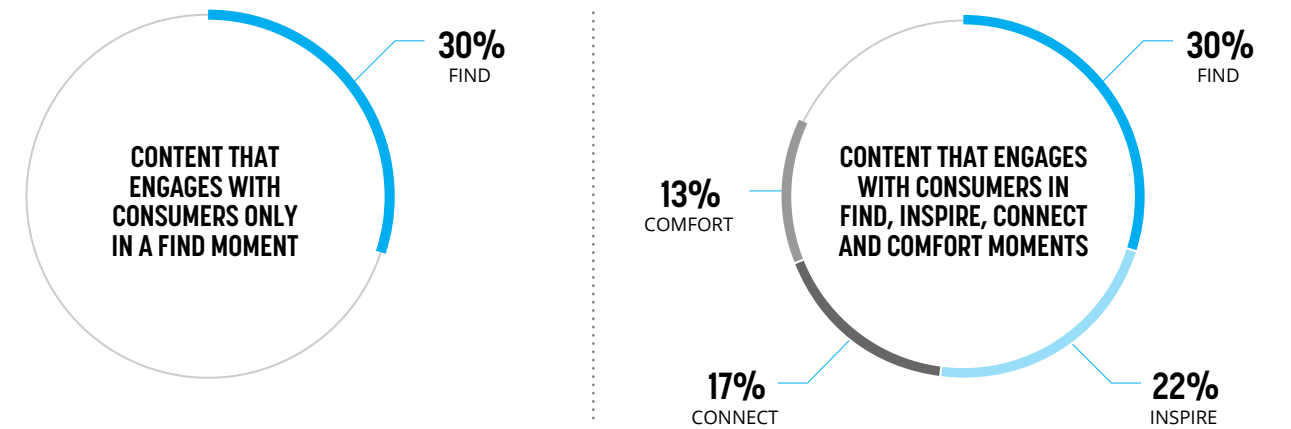
- 1 Eight types of content moments drive consumer engagement
- 2 Four dimensions define each moment representing the consumer's content experience, often within a matter of seconds
- 3 Demographics are key to finding the right combination of topics, formats and content segments
- 4 Topics can resonate more strongly in specific content moments
- 5 Formats vary in their relevance depending on the content moment

A marketer can use any of these five insights individually to build a stronger campaign. But truly effective content marketing programs come together when marketers leverage all five to create a diverse content marketing portfolio. **We call this a portfolio approach.** Here's an example.

A telecommunications company wants to diversify its content marketing portfolio. They select technology as a topic and millennials as an audience. The figure on the next page shows the share of all online content moments depending on the segment(s) selected. In the second instance, marketers can produce four different creative campaigns that align with these moments, rather than just one.

THE TOP FOUR CONTENT SEGMENTS FOR THE TECHNOLOGY TOPIC ARE FIND, INSPIRE, COMFORT AND CONNECT

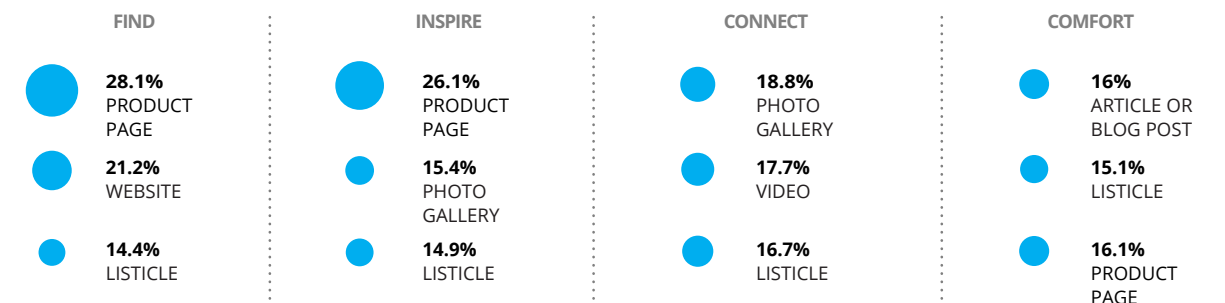
A PORTFOLIO APPROACH PROVIDES MORE OPPORTUNITIES TO ENGAGE WITH CONSUMERS IN MORE MOMENTS AND MINDSETS WITHIN THE TECHNOLOGY TOPIC



All four of these types of moments resonate with millennials as well. (Refer to Chart 3 in Appendix.)

The brand can produce content that resonates with consumers in four segments, not just one. In doing so, the brand becomes relevant in a total of 82% of all content moments for technology. Within these four content segments, the following formats resonate.

THE RIGHT FORMATS IN EACH CONTENT SEGMENT WILL ALIGN WITH CONSUMER NEEDS



We recommend that marketers build a diversified content portfolio, varying the content they produce using content segments as a pre-campaign guide. They now have the ability to select the right combinations of moments, formats and topics that drive relevant content experiences in both endemic and non-endemic environments. As a result, consumers can be reached in more ways, including in spaces that are less crowded and less expensive. Marketers also gain a data-driven framework that precedes the actual production and investment of content. The creative team is subsequently empowered to develop engaging, impactful campaigns across topics that are relevant to consumers in the right moment at the right time.

UNLOCKING CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT

These insights help address many pre-campaign challenges that can reduce the effectiveness of content marketing. Brands should use this data to complement the creative process—not replace it—by setting up the canvas for creatives to do what they do best. As a result, copywriters and art directors create art from insight. Here's an example.

USE CASE: BUILDING A CONTENT PORTFOLIO FOR COSMETICS

A cosmetics brand's digital content marketing strategy relies heavily on "beauty" and "fashion or style" topics. INSPIRE content resonates strongly with consumers for these topics, clearly outperforming other content segments. Within the INSPIRED moment, consumers most often engage with listicle and photo gallery formats.

But imagine the amount of content competing in this moment with these formats. The brand has an opportunity to break through the clutter by also placing relevant content in environments that may be less crowded within the beauty category.

Beauty topics align most closely with INSPIRE, FIND, COMFORT and FEEL GOOD moments. Let's consider the most relevant topics with each of these content segments, which include dating and relationships, career and social issues. The cosmetics brand uses this insight to produce content for each of these topics. For example, a photo slideshow highlights a skin regimen that will increase confidence in meetings despite a lack of sleep for new moms. Or, how women around the world are embracing their diversity with hairstyles that move away from traditional western looks.

Rather than creating a content strategy that is too narrow in distribution or too vague in focus, the brand is leveraging insight to produce a variety of content that people want to consume. The result is a holistic, fully-formed content marketing strategy with a higher probability of success.

CONCLUSION

The new era of advertising is one that requires a deep collaboration between creatives and data scientists. It's possible to bridge that divide in a complementary manner—one that does not reduce the strengths of either discipline. The key is to understand the ways consumers engage with digital content.

THE PORTFOLIO APPROACH: 4 STEPS TO TAKE BEFORE YOUR NEXT CONTENT MARKETING CAMPAIGN

- 1 Align consumer occasions to brand attributes:** It's imperative that we bring the story to the consumer, rather than expect the consumer to come to the brand. By selecting the moments that best fit the brand and understanding the motivations behind those moments, marketers can create more relevant content experiences that drive engagement.
- 2 Vary the brand's content:** To avoid pigeonholing themselves, marketers should explore different combinations of topics, formats and content moments to tell their story. A varied content portfolio ensures that they don't over invest in one area and under invest in another, which helps brands engage with consumers when they are in multiple need-states. It can also empower marketers to break through the clutter by targeting consumers in less crowded digital environments.
- 3 Anticipate each outcome:** After engaging with digital content, consumers leave the experience in a certain mindset, such as "primed for action" or "feeling relaxed." Marketers should ensure that they connect the content to action through a simple, streamlined way to buy, get more information or get in touch—all in accordance with the outcomes outlined in each content moment.
- 4 Embrace the blending of data and creativity:** Use this insight-driven approach to inspire the artistry behind the content marketing campaign. The eight content moments can help create content marketing campaigns that align with consumer motivations, giving creatives a head start on effective art and design.

PARTNER
STUDIO //
by AOL.

Developing an effective content marketing campaign is no easy task. AOL adds certainty to the process by integrating data and analytics into a marketer's content efforts from start to finish.

Partner Studio by AOL empowers brands to produce content infused with human insights to reach their relevant audiences in relevant formats. Delivery and placement of that content is driven by AOL's programmatic capabilities, solving for the often cited issues of scale and distribution. This end-to-end engagement continuum fuses the emotion of content with efficacy of technology, resulting in a holistic branded content solution that is primed for success from day one.

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APPENDIX

A NOTE ABOUT THE METHODOLOGY

Advertisers have traditionally relied on audience-based segmentation to better understand their consumers. These classifications, however, have little to do with the constantly changing wants, needs and motivations of an individual at a given time. A moments-based segmentation approach considers the fact that a particular piece of content can serve a range of consumer needs. Segmenting based on behavior, not just characteristics, brings brands closer to understanding purchase propensity. And with a growing amount of available data and marketing automation technology, marketers can truly understand the relationship between content and consumers.

SOURCES:

- ¹ "2015 U.S. Digital Future in Focus" ComScore, March 2015.
- ² Michael Wolf, "Think Again: Tech and Media Outlook 2016" WSJD Live Conference. Laguna Beach, CA. October 2015. Presentation.
- ³ "B2C Content Marketing 2016: Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends – North America" Content Marketing Institute, September 2015.
- ⁴ "Omnibus Survey" AOL & Advertiser Perceptions, July 2015.

FULL DATA SETS:

The segment that captures the largest share of online content moments is highlighted in blue.

FORMATS & CONTENT SEGMENTS

	INSPIRE	BE IN THE KNOW	FIND	COMFORT	CONNECT	FEEL GOOD	ENTERTAIN	UPDATE SOCIALLY
Read an online article or blog post	8.0%	26.8%	12.6%	16.0%	13.1%	10.7%	4.1%	14.9%
Watched a long online video	7.9%	3.5%	7.0%	11.0%	17.7%	12.1%	25.6%	8.6%
Watched a short online video	8.1%	3.1%	6.3%	11.1%	17.7%	14.0%	27.0%	10.9%
Read an online article in the form of a list	14.9%	9.4%	14.4%	15.1%	16.7%	10.4%	10.0%	10.2%
Viewed an online photo gallery or slideshow	15.4%	4.1%	6.6%	12.1%	18.8%	16.8%	13.1%	10.7%
Browsed a product or service category or gathered product information online	26.1%	3.9%	28.1%	16.1%	7.7%	9.7%	4.3%	3.7%
Got information online	11.5%	40.5%	21.2%	11.1%	7.7%	8.4%	4.8%	7.0%
Looked at what was being posted on your social networks	8.0%	8.7%	3.7%	7.6%	0.8%	17.8%	11.0%	34.0%

TOPICS & CONTENT SEGMENTS

	INSPIRE	BE IN THE KNOW	FIND	COMFORT	CONNECT	FEEL GOOD	ENTERTAIN	UPDATE SOCIALLY
Public Figure & Celebrities	8.6%	11.3%	6.3%	6.8%	5.4%	8.6%	16.2%	36.9%
Autos & Other Vehicles	13.1%	1.3%	38.8%	13.8%	8.8%	10.0%	5.6%	8.8%
Finance & Business News	0.0%	27.7%	30.3%	25.2%	6.7%	3.4%	1.7%	5.0%
Beauty	36.1%	0.4%	20.3%	10.1%	8.8%	14.5%	6.6%	3.1%
Fashion & Style	44.2%	0.0%	5.8%	11.6%	9.1%	16.5%	6.2%	6.6%
Technology	21.8%	3.2%	29.9%	13.0%	17.4%	5.9%	1.0%	7.8%
Food	42.1%	0.0%	20.9%	10.3%	15.6%	5.8%	4.5%	0.8%
Travel	38.2%	0.0%	18.0%	11.0%	13.2%	10.5%	6.1%	3.1%
Home	40.9%	0.0%	31.2%	10.0%	8.6%	5.2%	2.6%	1.5%
Medical	12.2%	0.0%	39.1%	28.7%	5.2%	8.7%	3.5%	2.6%
Sports	11.6%	7.5%	7.3%	7.7%	11.2%	16.9%	9.7%	28.1%
Health & Wellness	17.1%	0.0%	44.6%	17.4%	3.7%	12.1%	2.3%	2.7%
Dating & Relationships	12.5%	1.9%	4.8%	29.8%	6.7%	18.3%	11.5%	14.4%
Career	22.4%	3.5%	23.5%	25.9%	3.5%	12.9%	3.5%	4.7%
Personal Finance	2.4%	16.8%	37.6%	24.0%	8.8%	2.4%	0.0%	8.0%
Maps & Directions	14.0%	4.7%	40.7%	18.6%	4.7%	11.6%	2.3%	3.5%
Family & Parenting	3.5%	2.0%	9.5%	19.9%	9.5%	25.4%	25.4%	5.0%
Social Issues	0.8%	27.0%	13.1%	18.5%	12.0%	10.8%	3.5%	14.3%
Weather	7.2%	41.5%	19.4%	8.6%	5.4%	6.8%	3.0%	8.0%
Current Events	0.3%	48.0%	6.3%	10.5%	6.5%	8.8%	2.0%	17.6%
Documentary & Educational	12.7%	4.9%	15.7%	28.4%	13.7%	11.3%	4.9%	8.3%
Comedy	4.5%	0.4%	0.9%	11.1%	23.6%	5.9%	47.4%	6.3%

AUDIENCE GROUPS & CONTENT SEGMENTS

	INSPIRE	BE IN THE KNOW	FIND	COMFORT	CONNECT	FEEL GOOD	ENTERTAIN	UPDATE SOCIALLY
All (13-64)	15%	10%	16%	7%	5%	12%	18%	17%
Teens (13-17)	14.5%	5.5%	10.2%	7.5%	5.6%	11.1%	25.1%	20.5%
Millennials (18-35)	16.6%	5.8%	12.7%	11.7%	8.9%	13.7%	16.4%	14.1%
Gen X (36-50)	15.1%	10.8%	14.9%	7.3%	4.6%	13.9%	17.6%	15.9%
Boomers (51-64)	12.3%	14.9%	22.5%	4.6%	2.2%	11.5%	15.2%	16.9%
Male	14.0%	9.6%	15.4%	8.5%	8.0%	12.7%	16.1%	15.8%
Female	15.8%	9.5%	15.7%	8.0%	3.5%	13.2%	18.1%	16.0%
Dad	13.7%	6.4%	13.3%	12.6%	12.7%	16.1%	12.0%	13.2%
Mom	15.9%	8.8%	16.8%	9.5%	4.2%	15.1%	14.7%	15.2%
Hispanic/Latino	16.4%	5.3%	14.7%	14.9%	8.3%	14.4%	14.7%	11.4%
African American	14.5%	7.7%	16.4%	11.4%	9.2%	14.6%	14.1%	12.1%

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