A woman with dark hair, wearing a white textured coat and blue jeans, is sitting on a wooden bench in a park. She is holding and reading a newspaper. The background shows a stone building and some greenery. The scene is lit with warm, golden light, suggesting late afternoon or early morning.

**Taboola**

# PUBLISHER

## Benchmark Report

**Worldwide, General & Local News**

How to Maximize Revenue  
and Engagement by  
Balancing Editorial and  
Sponsored Content



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# INTRODUCTION

There's no question about it—publishers are the ones with the expertise on providing valuable content to their audiences, and recent events in 2020 have drawn more attention to content from local and general news publishers than ever before.

When events like these arise, there's an opportunity for publishers like you to capture more revenue and more long-term engaged website visitors—but to do that, you'll need more than just valuable content.

You'll need a customized user experience that balances editorial and sponsored content to provide the best outcome for your bottom line.

- Are users highly engaged? Show them more editorial content and nurture them down the path to subscriptions.
- Are users likely to bounce? Show them more sponsored content to capture a revenue opportunity, since they're likely not coming back.

Answering these questions requires insights into:

- Where users are coming from, meaning their traffic source
- Where users are engaging, meaning their device of choice



- Whether or not they're sticking around to read more, or bouncing right away
- What types of creatives encourage them to read more editorial content, if they're sticking around to read more
- What types ad formats are likely to capture clicks, if they're just going to bounce anyway
- How much traffic your publication gets

We're breaking down insights from 10,000+ publisher partners and digital properties in the Taboola network to bring you our recommendations for how to customize your user experience for each traffic source.



## HOW WE PULLED THE NUMBERS

We work with our network of publisher partners and digital properties in a variety of ways—we help them circulate editorial content, circulate sponsored content, optimize their pages and distribute their content effectively.

This activity provides the big picture into how and where people are finding publisher content, and how they're responding once they get there.

The basis of our analysis focused on these traffic sources:

**Direct** → when users type the URL directly into the browser or clicked on a bookmark

**Search** → traffic originating from search engines such as Google, Bing, and Yahoo

**Share** → traffic from open web link clicks, direct messages and emails between audiences

**Social** → traffic from social platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, etc.

Each of these sources of traffic brings with it its own unique impact on revenue and engagement. For each, we ran the numbers by device, publisher size, traffic, unique visits and revenue over a 90-day window to determine the best user experience for that traffic source.

We're going beyond just the benchmarks and highlighting the best opportunities to maximize revenue and engaged traffic to your site.

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# ENTERPRISE PUBLISHERS:

Data-Driven UX  
Recommendations  
by Traffic Source

Data-driven insights by device, traffic source, revenue, page views and unique visits for well-known publishers.





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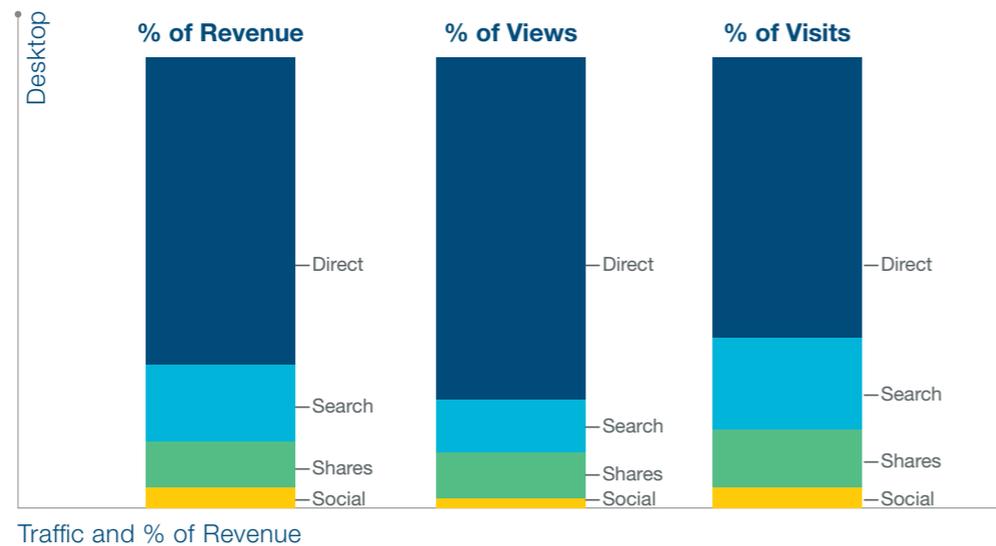
# GET THE TABOOLA FEED

START NOW

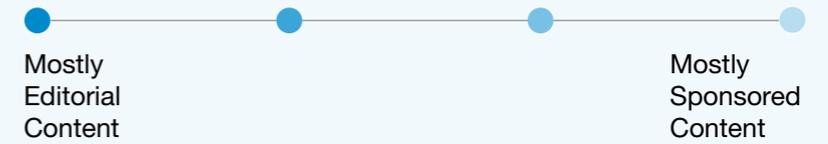
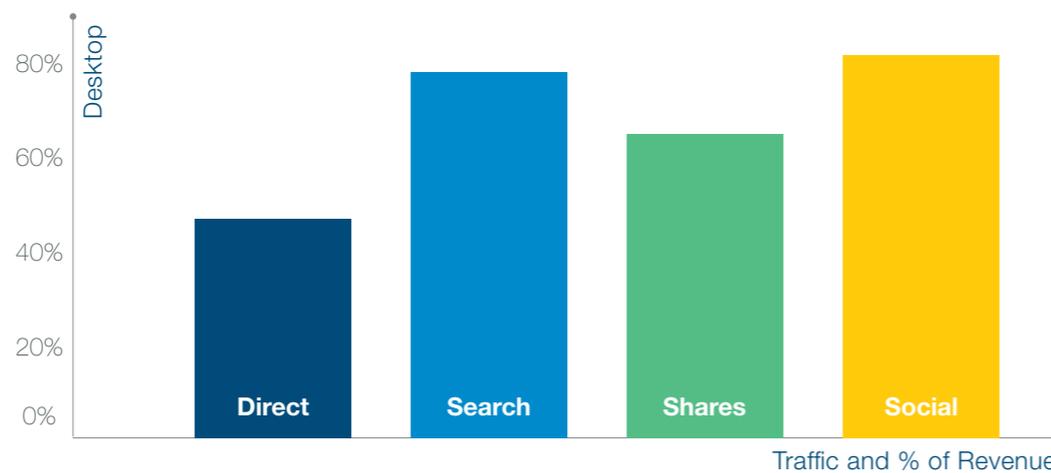
# DESKTOP TRAFFIC

Enterprise publishers are typically well-known, and it's no surprise that many people come to their sites directly through the search bar or a bookmark when using a desktop device. What is important to note is the decrease in bounce rate for audiences in the 'shares' category—treat those people to more editorial content than you would your search and social audiences.

Enterprise Traffic Engagement and % of Revenue by Source (Desktop)



Enterprise Bounce Rate by Source (Desktop)



- **Direct.** Audiences that come directly to publisher sites on desktop devices should be given the premium treatment—they drive the most revenue in the long run and bounce the least.

Tip: Show mostly editorial content.

- **Shares.** Audiences coming from emails, messaging apps and discovery platforms drive more revenue and bounce less than search and social audiences.

Tip: Recirculate editorial content, some sponsored content.

- **Search.** Audiences from search channels drive low revenue and bounce often.

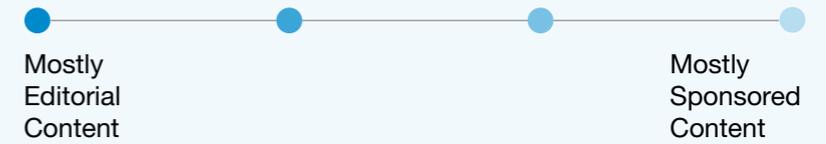
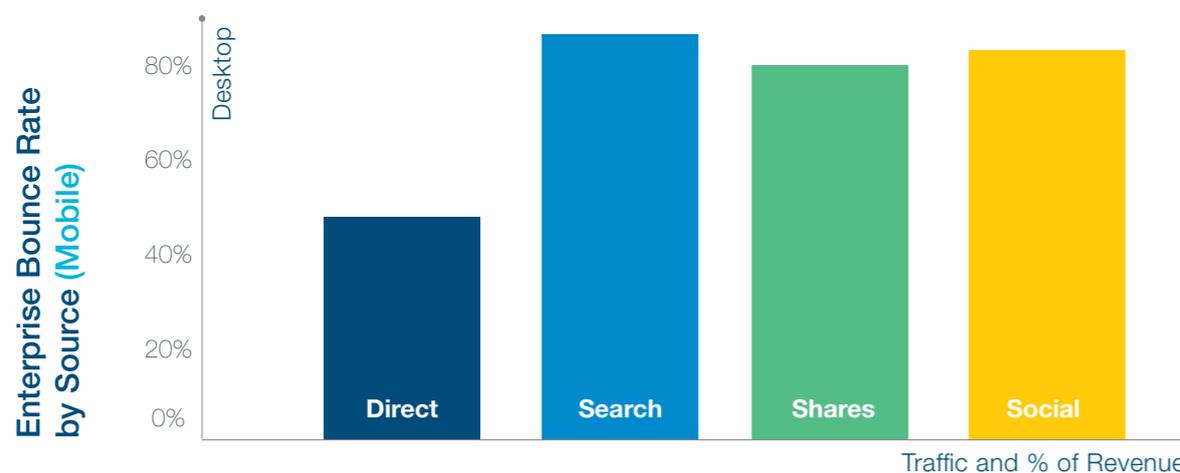
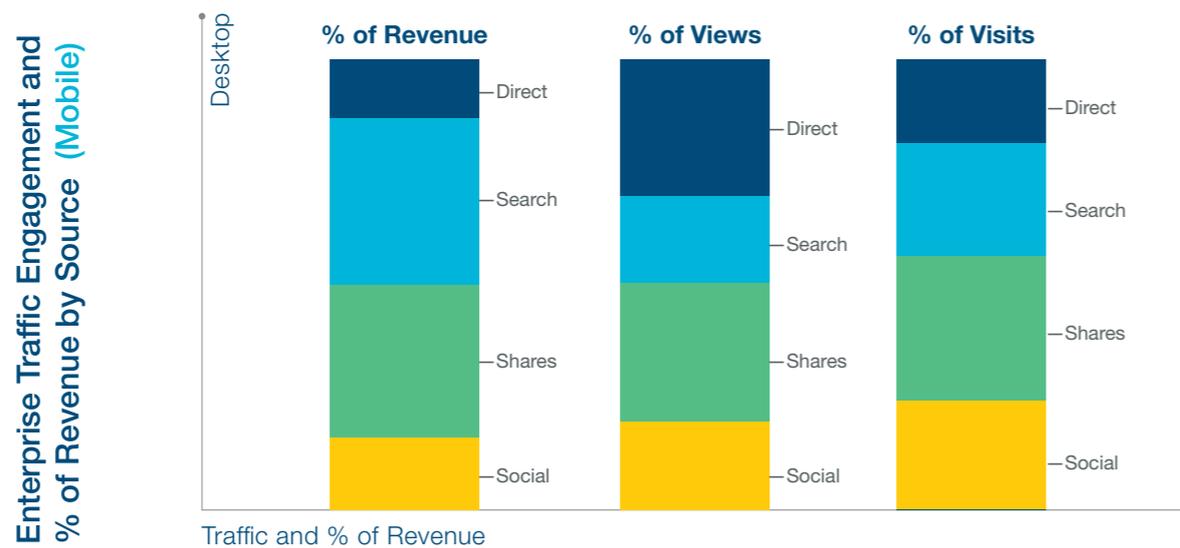
Tip: Show mostly sponsored content, some editorial content.

- **Social.** Audiences from social channels drive low revenue and bounce often.

Tip: Show mostly sponsored content.

# MOBILE TRAFFIC

When we look at mobile devices, the difference in revenue and engagement opportunity between the four traffic sources decreases drastically—here, all audiences are on a more even ground. Direct traffic still deserves the most premium treatment, and search leads the way in traffic that bounces the most.



- **Direct.** Audiences that come directly to publisher sites on mobile devices should still see more editorial content than sponsored.

**Tip:** Show mostly editorial content, some sponsored content.

- **Shares.** Audiences coming from emails, messaging apps and discovery platforms drive less revenue than search but bounce the least.

**Tip:** Show some editorial content, some sponsored content.

- **Search.** Audiences from search channels drive high revenue and engagement, but bounce often.

**Tip:** Show some editorial content, mostly sponsored content.

- **Social.** Audiences from social channels drive the least amount of revenue and engagement and bounce the most often.

**Tip:** Show mostly sponsored content.

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# SMB PUBLISHERS:

Data-Driven UX  
Recommendations  
by Traffic Source

Data-driven insights by device, traffic source, revenue, page views and unique visits for smaller, niche publishers.





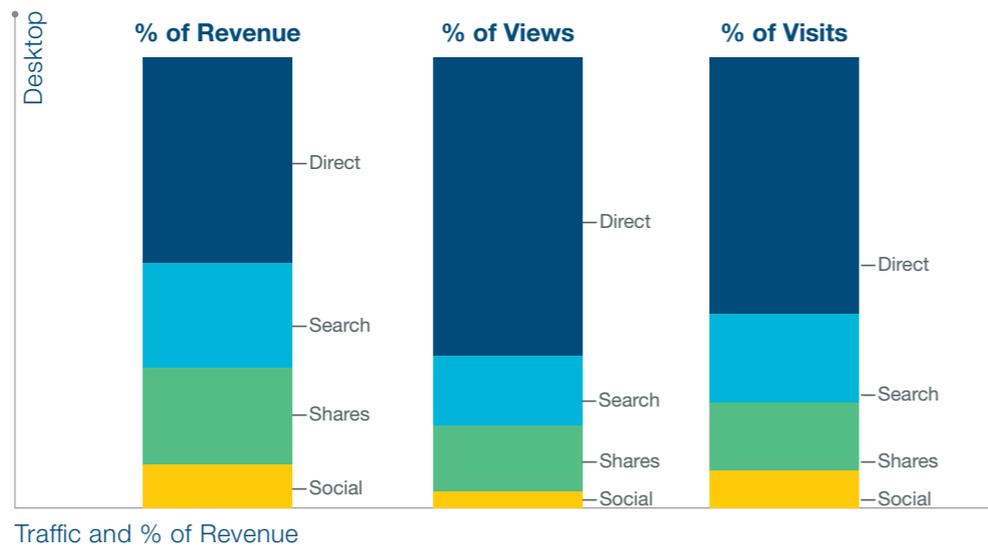
# GET THE TABOOLA FEED

START NOW

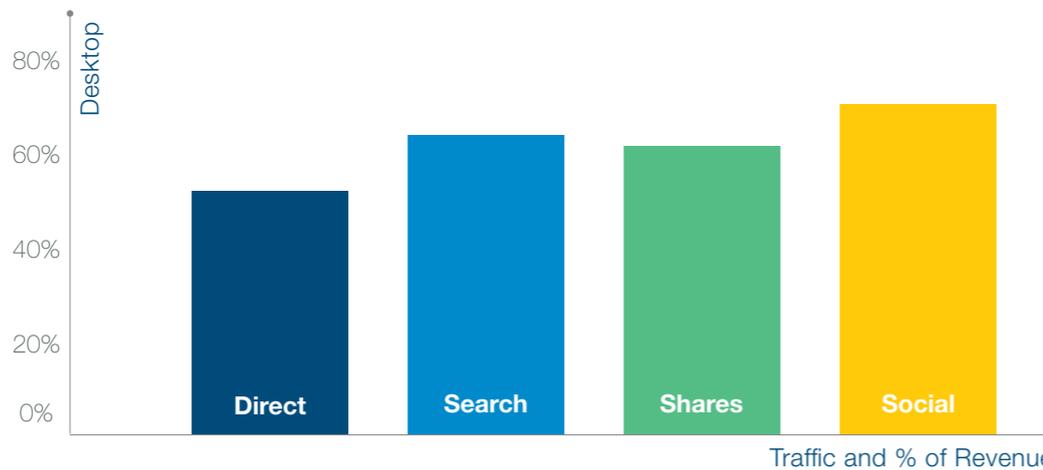
# DESKTOP TRAFFIC

The desktop premium trend holds true for smaller, niche publishers as well. Traffic from shares bounce the least here as well, indicating those audiences deserve a slightly more premium experience than search traffic, and a much more premium experience than social traffic.

SMB Publisher Traffic Engagement and % of Revenue by Source (Desktop)



SMB Bounce Rate by Source (Desktop)



- **Direct.** Audiences that come directly to publisher sites on desktop devices should be given the premium treatment—they drive the most revenue in the long run and bounce the least.

Tip: Show mostly editorial content.

- **Shares.** Audiences coming from emails, messaging apps and discovery platforms drive more revenue and bounce less than search and social audiences.

Tip: Show mostly editorial content, some sponsored content.

- **Search.** Audiences from search channels drive revenue, but bounce often.

Tip: Show mostly sponsored content, some editorial content.

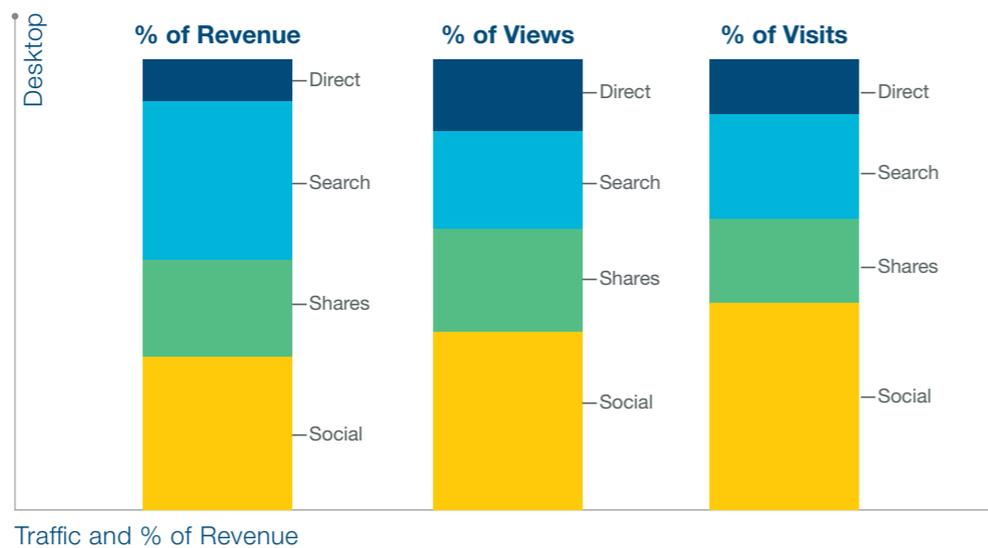
- **Social.** Audiences from social channels drive low revenue and bounce often.

Tip: Show mostly sponsored content.

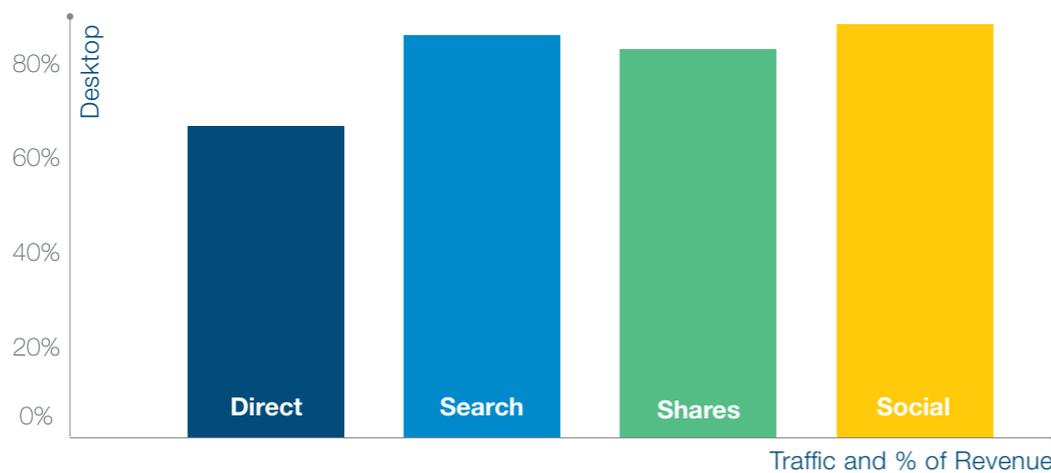
# MOBILE TRAFFIC

Direct traffic falls from grace on mobile devices for smaller, niche publishers and digital properties. Here, traffic from shares is king, driving the highest amount of revenue and engagement, while also bouncing slightly less than audiences from search and social channels.

SMB Publisher Traffic Engagement and % of Revenue by Source (Mobile)



SMB Bounce Rate by Source (Mobile)



- **Shares.** Audiences coming from emails, messaging apps and discovery platforms drive some revenue and engagement, but bounce less than search and social audiences.

**Tip:** Show mostly editorial content, some sponsored content.

- **Direct.** Audiences that come directly to sites on mobile devices don't drive much revenue or engagement, but bounce the least

**Tip:** Show some editorial content, some sponsored content.

- **Search.** Audiences from search channels drive a lot of revenue or engagement, but bounce often.

**Tip:** Show mostly sponsored content, some editorial content.

- **Social.** Audiences from social channels drive a lot of revenue or engagement, but bounce often.

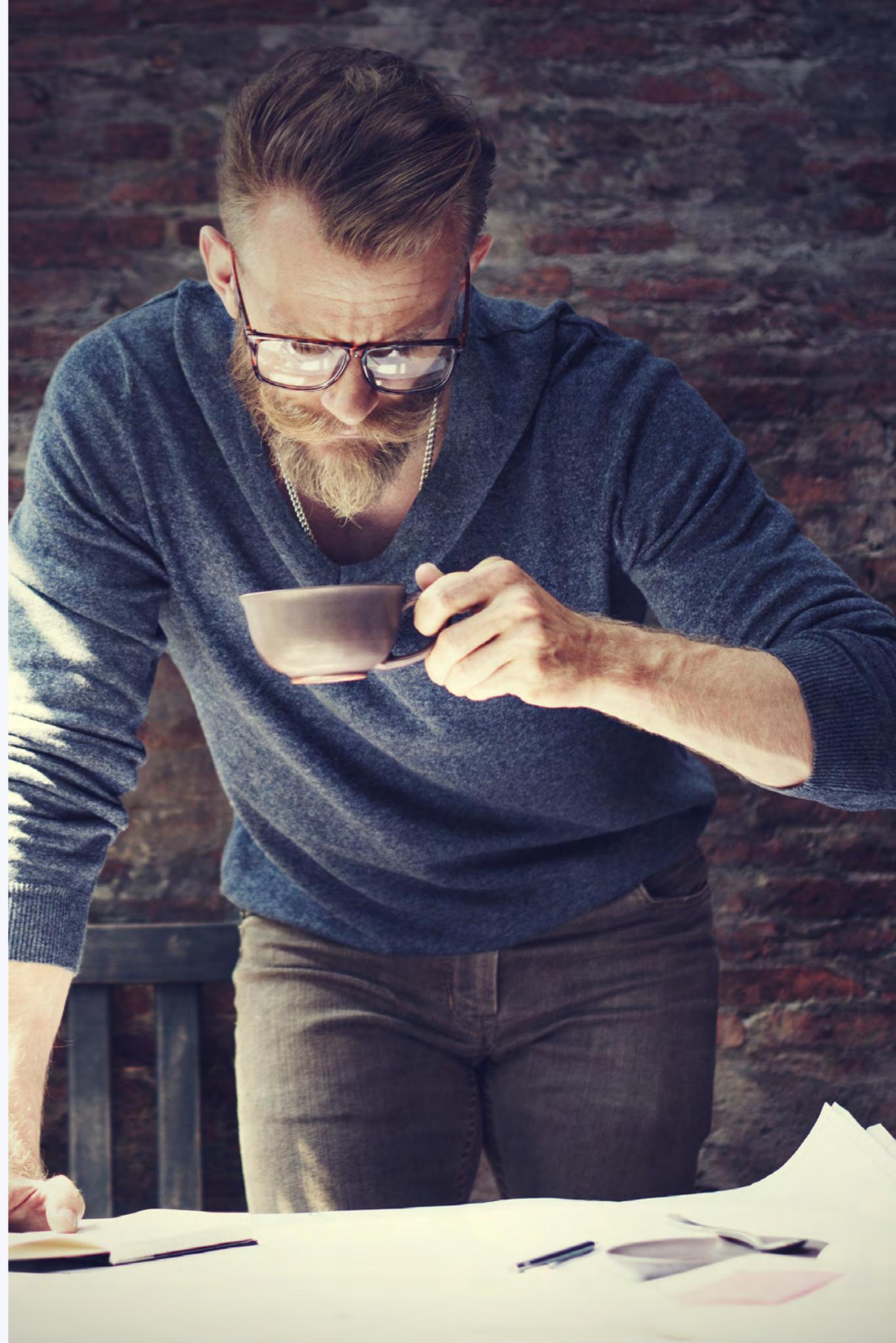
**Tip:** Show mostly sponsored content, some editorial content.

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# CREATIVE STRATEGIES

For Recirculating Editorial Content

Headline and thumbnail best practices, with examples





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# GET THE TABOOLA FEED

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# IMAGE BEST PRACTICES BY CTR

If your audiences are scanning for more of your content to consume, the image is what will catch their eye first. We're seeing higher click-through-rates (CTRs) on articles promoted with the following types of images:

- B&W photos (13%+ CTR)
- Photos with woman (11%+ CTR)
- Photos without food (37%+ CTR)
- Face size close up (25%+ CTR)
- Photography (42%+ CTR)
- No text photos (17%+ CTR)

**B/W** (IMAGE COLOR)



+13% CTR than Color

**Woman** (GENDER)



+11% CTR than Man

**No Food** (FOOD)



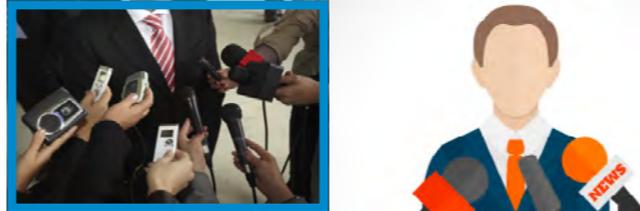
+37% CTR than Food

**Close Up** (FACE SIZE)



+25% CTR than Distance

**Photo** (IMAGE TYPE)



+42% CTR than illustration

**No Text** (TEXT)



+17% CTR than Text

# IMAGE BEST PRACTICES BY CTR

- Photos with Person (20%+ CTR)
- Photos with Animals (22%+ CTR)
- Outdoor (15%+ CTR)

## Person

(SUBJECT)



+20% CTR than No Person

## Animals

(SUBJECT)



+22% CTR than no Animals

## Outdoor

(LOCATION)



+15% CTR than Indoor

# HEADLINE BEST PRACTICES BY CTR

Trending keywords fluctuate a lot based on what's hot in the news any given week. At trends.taboola.com, we surface the keywords and phrases that work well each week, starting on Sunday.

Here's a snapshot:

## Strong Engagement Keywords

*High CTRs Due to High Use*

Pictures	+274% <b>CTR</b>
Members	+142% <b>CTR</b>
Check	+75% <b>CTR</b>
Year-Old	+71% <b>CTR</b>
Indian	+65% <b>CTR</b>
Including	+56% <b>CTR</b>
Family	+47% <b>CTR</b>
Dead	+45% <b>CTR</b>
Florida	+45% <b>CTR</b>
Corona	+41% <b>CTR</b>

## Strong Competition Keywords

*Low CTRs Due to High Use*

Day	-73% <b>CTR</b>
Weather	-64% <b>CTR</b>
Top	-56% <b>CTR</b>
Trusted	-54% <b>CTR</b>
Cuomo	-51% <b>CTR</b>
Social	-49% <b>CTR</b>
Response	-49% <b>CTR</b>
York	-48% <b>CTR</b>
News	-48% <b>CTR</b>
Toll	-47% <b>CTR</b>

# HEADLINE BEST PRACTICES BY CTR

Trending keywords fluctuate a lot based on what's hot in the news any given week. At trends.taboola.com, we surface the keywords and phrases that work well each week, starting on Sunday.

Here's a snapshot:

## Opportunity Keywords

*High CTRs, but Low Use*

Sudden	+183% <b>CTR</b>
Jong-Un	+183% <b>CTR</b>
Influencer	+183% <b>CTR</b>
Licked	+183% <b>CTR</b>
Bowl	+183% <b>CTR</b>
Accepts	+181% <b>CTR</b>
Pune	+181% <b>CTR</b>
Youth	+181% <b>CTR</b>
Cases	+180% <b>CTR</b>
Cluster	+180% <b>CTR</b>

Transmission	+180% <b>CTR</b>
Community	+180% <b>CTR</b>
Places	+179% <b>CTR</b>
Outfit	+178% <b>CTR</b>
Athiya	+178% <b>CTR</b>
Huballi	+178% <b>CTR</b>
Shetty's	+178% <b>CTR</b>
Prayagraj	+177% <b>CTR</b>
Comfort	+176% <b>CTR</b>
Tragic	+176% <b>CTR</b>

## EDITORIAL CONTENT EXAMPLES

Based on our keyword and headline predictions, these editorial content creatives would likely drive higher CTRs for audience members looking for more of your content to consume.



**People Find Local Communities Online While Working From Home**

ONLINE PUBLISHER



**Recent Tragic Events Have Activated Healthcare Workers**

ONLINE PUBLISHER



**Pictures of Landscapes Abroad Reduce Anxiety for Some**

ONLINE PUBLISHER



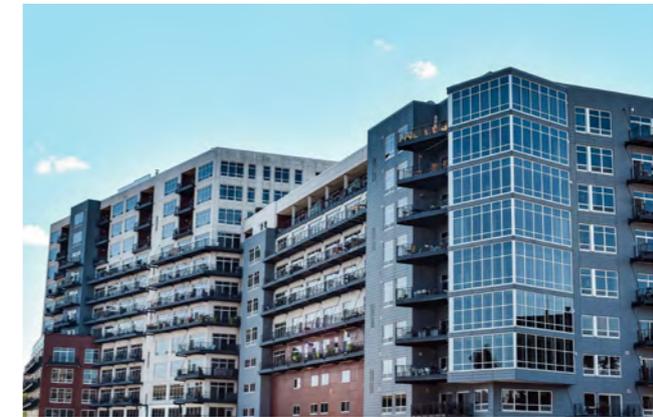
**Families Find Some Solace in Digital Funeral Arrangements**

ONLINE PUBLISHER



**These Brands are Winning the Race for Outfits That Provide Comfort**

ONLINE PUBLISHER



**These Places to Rent Provide the Best Lifestyle for Cost**

ONLINE PUBLISHER

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# ADS FORMATS

Circulating Sponsored  
Content

Research reveals the ad  
formats that drive the most  
clicks on the open web





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# GET THE TABOOLA FEED

START NOW

# NIELSEN USES EYE TRACKING AND BRAIN WAVES

## to Discover Most Favorable Ads

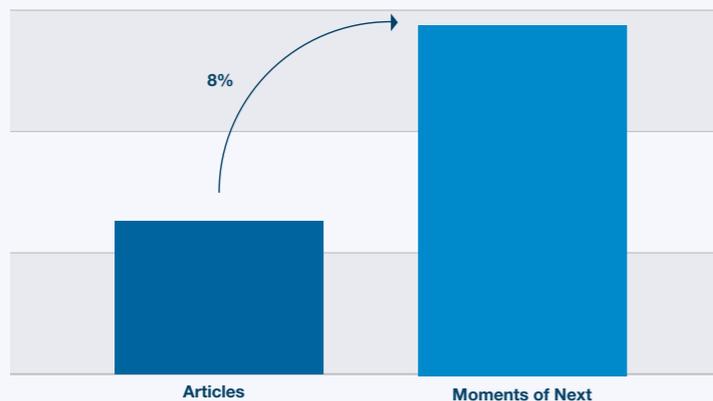
For those audiences that you're showing more sponsored content—how and where should that content appear? Taboola and Nielsen used BrainVu's AI platform to find out. We tested people's attentiveness and emotional response while in different mobile contexts, using different biomarkers like eye-tracking, brainwaves and more to measure whether or not those ads had an impact.

Research was conducted in the U.S. with 60 participants. Here's what we found:



### Readers are 8% More Open Minded in the 'Moment of Next'

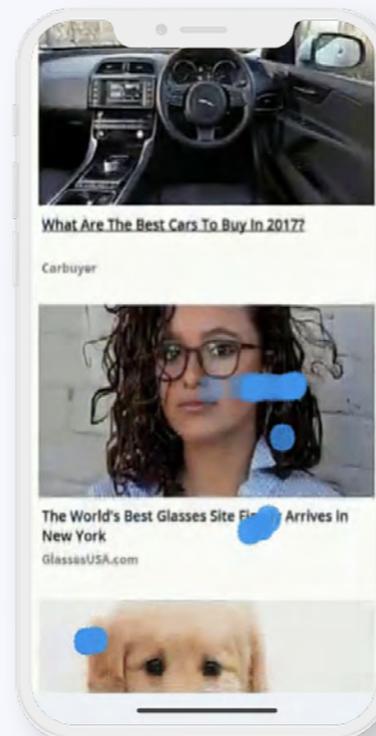
They're more likely to click an ad at the bottom of the article, after they've finished reading what they came for.



nielsen

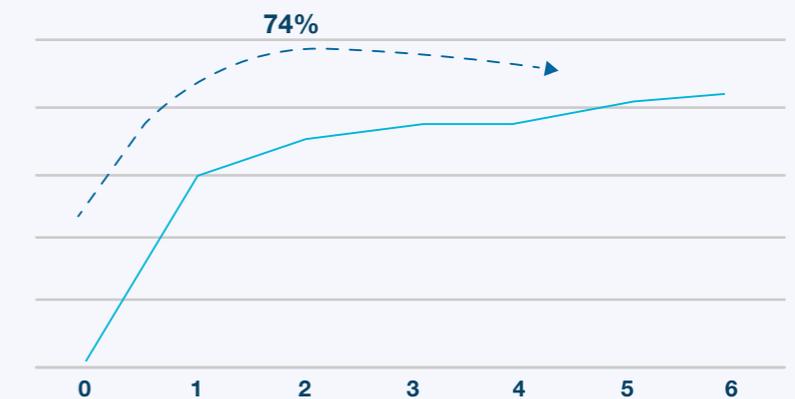
### Readers Paid Attention 20%+ and Were 17%+ Emotional About Ads in a Feed

When scrolling through a feed environment, readers were more likely to be engaged.



### The More Readers Scrolled, the More Likely They Were to Click

The longer they scrolled, the more likely it was they'd click.



nielsen



# GET STARTED WITH TABOOLA

Taboola enables nearly half the world's connected population to discover what's interesting and new at the moments they're most ready to explore. Powered by Deep Learning, AI, and a massive dataset, Taboola's Discovery platform creates new monetization, engagement, and audience opportunities for digital properties.



## We've Got the Tools to Help You

### Taboola Feed

Bring the non-disruptive scrolling news feed experience of social networks right to your pages.

### Mobile SDK and AMP Pages

Bring the full scope of Taboola's publisher platform capabilities to the mobile environment.

### Taboola Newsroom

Reach customers closer to the point of sale— target people who are more likely to convert.

Powered by Taboola's predictive engine and massive data set of over 1B internet users, Taboola Newsroom helps writers, editors and special-interest teams make informed decisions to increase readership.

That's not all. Taboola has all of the targeting options you need for a successful discovery campaign—location, demographic, creative and more.

Get the Taboola Feed Today

START NOW

