

**Digital First: An Exploratory Study of Newspaper Website Interactivity on
Edmontonjournal.com**

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DISCLAIMER

This is an exploratory research project. All recommendations outlined within the discussion have been suggested based on my own interpretations of the data collected. Any application by a person or company of the proposals mentioned will be at their own discretion.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	2
DISCLAIMERS.....	3
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	4
ABSTRACT.....	7
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	8
2. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	10
Audience Use of Online Newspapers' Interactive Features.....	10
Uptake of Interactivity on Newspaper Websites.....	13
The Role of Gatekeeping at Online News Publications.....	16
Modality and Innovative Visual Story Forms.....	18
3. COMMUNICATION THEORY.....	21
4. METHODOLOGY.....	23
5. ANALYSIS PROCEDURES.....	31
6. FINDINGS.....	33
Demographics.....	33
Frequency and Length of Site Visitation.....	35
Readers' Actions on the Website.....	36
Sharing Items Found.....	37
Commenting on Stories.....	39
Viewing Videos.....	40
Preferred Content of Articles Read.....	41
Reasons for Visiting Edmontonjournal.com.....	43

Other Online News Publications.....	44
Platforms Used to Access Site.....	45
7. ANALYSIS.....	46
Males versus Females.....	46
Preferred Types of Articles.....	46
Accessing Video Clips and Viewing Photo Galleries.....	46
Reading and Commenting on Stories.....	47
Time Spent on Site and Frequency of Visitation.....	49
Platform Utilized to Access Site.....	50
Age-Related Findings.....	50
Reasons for Visiting.....	51
Sharing Site Content.....	52
Time Spent Per Visit and Frequency of Site Visitation.....	53
Device or Platform Typically Used to Access Site.....	54
Other Areas of Interest.....	56
Commenting.....	56
Employment Status.....	56
Open-Ended Responses.....	57
8. DISCUSSION.....	63
RQ1: In what ways do <i>Edmonton Journal</i> readers interact with the content of the newspaper's website?.....	63
RQ2: Do <i>Edmonton Journal</i> website visitors use and appreciate the interactive features? How often are they utilizing them?.....	65

RQ3: What type of dialogue and interaction do *Edmonton Journal* readers actually want to see on the newspaper website?..... 66

Conclusion..... 67

Limitations and Areas for Future Research..... 69

REFERENCES..... 71

APPENDICES..... 74

ABSTRACT

Within the field of print media, it has become apparent in today's world of ever-changing technologies that capturing and holding onto an audience is extremely difficult. In response to the growing number of bloggers and amateur journalists inhabiting the internet landscape in recent years, news publications have begun to move from a reliance on the print edition, focused on a medium of broadcast, to that of a dialogue with their audience by taking a "digital first" approach.

As a result, newspapers are striving to add increasingly interactive features to their websites. The goal is to keep the audience's attention while they navigate the site and to motivate them to come back more often.

Filling a gap in this field of research, this cross-sectional exploratory study looked specifically at one Canadian publication, the website of the *Edmonton Journal* (edmontonjournal.com), and whether their online audience interacts with the interactive content. A survey was conducted online and the data collected was analyzed and then viewed through the lens of the uses and gratifications (U&G) theory to communication.

It was found that the readers of this particular online news publication are still interacting with the website on a broadcast level. Visitors to the site are participating, but not necessarily communicating and interacting to the full extent available. Some of the features present may not be the right ones for their current audience. Therefore, the editors of this website may need to further consider how best to target specific reader interests and preferred digital platforms based on the findings discussed here.

INTRODUCTION

Within the field of print media, it has become apparent in today's world of ever-changing technologies that capturing and holding onto an audience is extremely difficult. In response to the growing number of bloggers and amateur journalists inhabiting the internet landscape in recent years, news publications have begun to move from a reliance on the print edition, focused on a medium of broadcast, to that of a dialogue with their audience by taking a "digital first" approach, emphasizing more and more the use of their online websites.

For most major publications, moving to the digital realm has opened the door to a wider population. Local news is no longer relegated to the city in which it happens; rather stories are now globally shared. In order to succeed on a more international level - maintaining local and gaining foreign audiences - newspaper websites must not only provide relevant content for readers near and far, but also be innovative in the portrayal of site content. As a result, newspapers are striving to add increasingly interactive features to their websites. In addition to regular news articles, newspaper websites are providing their audience with extended photo galleries, exclusive videos, space for commenting, buttons to share items with friends or family using their e-mail or a variety of social media sites, links to local bloggers, and even requesting that readers share photos through a designated e-mail address or share information on a number of topics, such as their favorite local winter activities, which can then be placed on interactive maps or graphics that remain accessible for a longer period of time. The goal is to keep the audience's attention while they navigate the site and to increase their motivation to come back and visit more often.

This research project aims to use the discovery paradigm to conduct an exploratory study of the *Edmonton Journal*, which is one of two major newspapers in the city of Edmonton, Alberta. The focus of the study will be the website of the newspaper in terms of the content and

interactivity available as well as the audience who uses it. Who are they? How often do they visit? What brings them to the site? What features do they make use of? The research findings will likely prove to be insightful for the *Edmonton Journal* because they will either give evidence that the newspaper is on the right track with the content and features now available to visitors, or they will show that the publication has to continue to evolve and develop the website to meet the needs and wants of readers before the *Journal* can fully satisfy audience expectations. If the newspaper's online website fails to cater to its visitors, they will eventually turn elsewhere for their news.

On a larger scale, while citizen media initiatives are welcome on the internet nowadays, these amateur news sites have stripped away the sense of exclusivity that long-established forms of media have had for years in print. For that reason, knowledge gained from this study will assist traditional news organizations in remaining as viable sources of digital information because the data collected will allow these news providers to compete against the growing number of citizen created sites while credibility is maintained through reputation and resources. Just because it has taken more time for print publications to make their move to the digital realm, it does not make them any less relevant. Newspaper publications still have important things to say and they often have more resources than the average citizen blogger to seek out the most accurate and pertinent information that readers need to know every day. Therefore, newspapers, in whatever form they come in, are vital to our daily lives.

This exploratory study will look specifically at the website of the *Edmonton Journal* (edmontonjournal.com) and why the online audience interacts with available content. The goal is to fill a gap in this field of research by examining newspaper website interactivity in depth at one Canadian publication, rather than comparing several sites as done in previous research. The specific purposes of the research are: 1) find out if the audience interacts with the content, 2)

assess the appreciation of content by the audience, and 3) determine any potential changes to the content based on their feedback.

This research paper will provide a review of past literature focused, in general, on web interactivity and, in particular, literature on online news website interactivity with audiences. The literature review, formulation of the research questions, and the analysis of the results have been informed by the uses and gratifications (U&G) communication theory, specifically as developed by Jay Blumler and Elihu Katz. After which, there will be a discussion of the project methodology, findings, analysis of the data and suggestions for future study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A thorough search of the communications literature revealed that no research has been done about online newspaper interactivity in Canada. A review of the literature relevant to this study topic found that the research can be categorized into four main areas: audience use of interactive features on newspaper websites, the uptake of interactivity on online newspapers, the role of gatekeeping at online news publications, and the use of modality and innovative story forms. These topics guided me to this project's research questions.

Audience Use of Online Newspapers' Interactive Features

The studies most similar to this Edmonton-based research project are a study focused on the websites of two Swedish news publications, and several studies completed on newspapers in the American Midwest. Most recently, Anders Olaf Larsson (2011) published an article about his case study of two of Sweden's largest newspapers, *Aftonbladet* and *Sydsvenskan* (pg. 1185). Citing Fortunati and Sarrica, Larsson (2011) stated that the practitioners in the newspaper industry have struggled to move from the print to the digital arena and have failed to take

advantage of the ample opportunities afforded by the internet to interact with website visitors (p. 1180). The case study's goal was to examine visitor's website use in terms of interactivity choices and user's appreciation of available features.

While Larsson (2011) chose not to strictly define the term "interactivity," he still made a point of saying that the results were based on how the "website visitors experience the concept" of interactivity (p. 1181). In other words, the concept is whatever it means to the person who completed the survey questionnaire. Larsson recruited respondents through advertisements placed on the two newspaper websites being studied, and the survey was conducted online. Although that can be seen as capturing only a narrow segment of the population in terms of the demographic surveyed, the online questionnaire ensured that those who participated were more familiar with the websites and, therefore, more familiar with the variety of interactive features being discussed.

Larsson (2011) compiled a thorough list of 14 features deemed to be interactive on the newspaper websites in his study (p. 1188). For all 14 features, a seven-point Likert-type scale was used to determine respondents' use and appreciation of each (Larsson, 2011, p. 1186). After he analyzed the results, Larsson (2011) determined that appreciation and use of certain features could be grouped together to create the profiles of five different types of newspaper website users: The Bystander, The Prosumer, The Lurker, The Filter and The Critic (p. 1190). The Bystander appreciates, but does not use; The Prosumer (producer-consumer) uses the site, but also contributes regularly through functions such as chatting and commenting; The Lurker is passive, appreciating what others have to say, but limiting his or her own participation to more minimal forms of interaction such as polls; The Filter shares information from the site with others; and The Critic appreciates opportunities for visitor input and influence (Larsson, 2011, p. 1190).

The study went on to look at other independent variables that may have influenced use and appreciation (Larsson, 2011, p. 1190); however, for the purposes of this new study of the *Edmonton Journal*, what has been discussed thus far should suffice. The aim of looking at the *Edmonton Journal* is simply to determine whether or not readers use and appreciate the content on the website and if so, how, not why.

Forming the basis of Larsson's 2011 study was research conducted by Deborah S. Chung (2008) who has completed several projects (some in conjunction with other researchers, Chung & Nah, 2009; Chung & Yoo, 2008) regarding interactivity of newspaper websites. The research project that really laid out the foundation for Larsson was Chung's (2008) work that focused on identification of patterns and prediction of use. Chung (2008) sought to distinguish categories of interactive features existent on newspaper websites (p. 661). In total, four categories were extracted: medium interactive features allow readers to experience news in a way that gives them more control and choice; medium/human interactive features allow for more customization of the news; human/medium interactive features provide a space for users to express personal opinions; human interactive features make possible dialogue between newspaper employees and site visitors. Medium interactive features include video and audio; medium/human interactive features include customized weather, updates, search, alerts and polls; human/medium interactive features include "submit photos" function, "submit stories" function, reporter/editor e-mail links and letters-to-editor; human interactive features include chat, Q&A and forums (Chung, 2009, p. 77). Chan Yun Yoo (2011), who previously collaborated on research with Chung in 2008, simplified these categories even further by viewing them as either human or medium (pp. 70-71). Yoo (2011) explained that in her study, the concept of audience interactivity "embraces the entire spectrum of interactivity from two-way (i.e., a lower level) to interactive communications (i.e., a higher level) and incorporates both medium and human interactivity" (pp. 70-71). At the lower

level of interactivity, clicking hyperlinks to access more detailed news is seen as medium interactivity while e-mailing thoughts on news coverage without the expectation of an immediate response is seen as human interactivity (Yoo, 2011, p. 71). Also seen as human interactivity, but at a higher level, is the use of real-time discussion between readers and journalists or amongst readers on forums or blogs or in the comment fields (Yoo, 2011, p. 71). "In this way, communicators can be human or medium, contingent upon whether they can function as both senders and receivers, and the roles of sender and receiver should be interchangeable among online users" (Yoo, 2011, p. 71). Further to that, those who are prone to information-seeking motives are more likely to make use of medium interactivity in order to expose themselves to more content, and those who are motivated to increase their social-interaction are much more likely to turn towards human interactivity features (Yoo, 2011, p. 72). These categories derived from the work done by Chung (2008) and Yoo (2011), along with Larsson's (2011) user profiles informed the formation of the following question in the study of the *Edmonton Journal*.

RQ1: In what ways do *Edmonton Journal* readers interact with the content of the newspaper's website?

Uptake of Interactivity on Newspaper Websites

A large and pertinent portion of the studies conducted by Larsson (2011) and Chung (2008), involved looking at variables that measured the intensity of use (p. 1191; p. 662). The following studies discussed have to do with the uptake by newspaper websites of media and interactivity, which is not exactly on par with the purpose of this proposed study. Yet, the results gleaned from the research help increase understanding of the factors that shape site content.

In a study of American media, Pablo J. Boczkowski (2004) wanted to know whether or not the depiction of the news audience by news workers as "either consumers or also coproducers shapes the adoption of multimedia and interactivity in online newsrooms" (p. 200). What he found was that the newspaper websites that created a greater boundary between the organization's web entity and its print entity tended to make use of either multimedia or interactive technology to a greater extent than newspapers where the print news team and the online news team worked together more closely (Boczkowski, 2004, p. 204). In other words, when print and online collaborate more, the online newsroom tends to adapt to the broadcast tradition of the print newsroom, thereby utilizing little multimedia and interactivity on the website (Boczkowski, 2004, pp. 203-204).

The staff of the newspaper sites that Boczkowski (2004) studied all reiterated the belief that less technically sophisticated content on the sites was key to reaching a broad audience (p. 205). Site features that were too complex to navigate, too large to load, or required too much work would deter visitors from returning to the website again. *Edmontonjournal.com*, a newspaper website that very much embraces the digital side of their publication and makes sure to utilize a variety of interactive features, goes against this thinking and assumes, instead, that the inclusion of sometimes complex added features will actually engage site visitors more fully and will keep them coming back.

Larsson completed further research in 2012 that again examined interactivity on Swedish newspaper websites, questioning what kind of interactivity, how much there is and why it is used. This time, Larsson (2012) took into account several independent variables including: newspaper size, media ownership, region and competition within region, length of web presence and number and age of staff (p. 199), which he believed played a role in determining how much interactivity was feasible on those websites. Looking at these particular variables does make sense because the

more resources a publication has at its disposal, the more expertise it will have when creating and implementing interactive features and the more competition there is in that region, the greater the push felt by publications to incorporate interactive functionalities for their audience. What Larsson's study (2012) found was that the websites that did, in fact, "offer higher levels of total interactivity are those that belong to large, national newspapers with younger web staff" (p. 206). While this is an interesting aspect that has added to Larsson's research in the field, because we do not have access to information about the size of the *Edmonton Journal* web staff, and the ages of their employees, among the other variables that Larsson mentions, it is a topic that will not be touched on in this *Edmonton Journal* website study. The focus here is not on how this particular newspaper website is best able to incorporate interactive features on its website, but, rather, on whether or not *Edmonton Journal* website readers are bothering to make use of the features that have already been provided.

In another study of online and website news use, Benjamin Gaskins and Jennifer Jerit (2012) loosely based their research on uses and gratifications theory (p. 192), questioning whether internet news is a replacement for traditional media outlets (p. 191). Gaskins and Jerit (2012) said, "at the heart of the replacement hypothesis is the notion that individuals select among media based on how well a particular outlet meets their needs and goals" (p. 193), therefore, the greater the variety and convenience when it comes to news, the more gratified the audience will be and the more likely they will continue to use that website (p. 195). Consequently, frequency of site visitation and time spent using the site correlates with site appreciation to a high degree. In light of these research results from previous studies, it became clear that this study needed to assess reader use and appreciation of *Edmonton Journal* site features by looking at what users do when they are online and how frequently they access the website.

RQ2: Do *Edmonton Journal* website visitors use and appreciate the interactive features?

How often are they utilizing them?

The Role of Gatekeeping at Online News Publications

Further searches of the literature did not reveal any research projects that were as close to this proposed project as those by Larsson (2011) and Chung (2008). However, the extensive research relating to the subject of newspaper websites and their gatekeeping role is also relevant to this study, so this literature will also be examined. As mentioned prior when discussing the background of this particular project, the newspaper's purpose throughout history was to broadcast news of events and stories out to the public in a one-way direction. Apart from letters to the editor, relegated to perhaps a half-page or page in a printed publication, there has never been much dialogue between producers of newspapers and their consumers. Newspapers that have moved towards a home on the internet have changed that immensely, increasing engagement by allowing communication in multiple forms.

In their research, Franck Rebillard and Annelise Touboul (2010) investigated user participation and editorial policy on newspaper websites. Rebillard and Touboul (2010) contemplated the internet being a 'media of the masses,' and discussed the idea of its users being 'authors-readers' (p. 325), those that both produce and consume rather than just one and not the other. Even so, Deuze noted that outcomes from research in the realm of media and two-way interactivity has suggested that media professionals are reluctant to share control over the product with an audience that has traditionally been relegated to a passive role (as cited in Rebillard & Touboul, 2010, p. 327). Focused on four major newspaper websites based in the United Kingdom, France, North America and South America, Rebillard and Touboul (2010) intended to

extend previous research that claimed that under the surface of commitment to participation on the part of the producers of the sites lay a zone in which non-professional contributions are "contained and exploited" (p. 328). Their study results confirmed that it is difficult for professional producers to welcome amateur expression and that there is still much to learn through trial and error, as well as research, before newspaper websites figure out how best to share their editorial territory (Rebillard & Touboul, 2010, p. 331).

In another research study about newspaper websites and gatekeeping, Eli Skogerbø and Marte Winsvold (2011) discussed the use and assessment of local print and online newspapers and quoted a journalist they interviewed in 2005 as saying, "we do not publish entire stories online although the stories are given the same layout and headlines" (p. 221). The reason given was that the newspaper still wanted their print edition to be the main source of news because the print copy generates revenue. Skogerbø and Winsvold (2011) concluded that there was a discrepancy in readers' attitudes between the newspaper's print product and online product: user-generated content, including interviews, letters-to-the-editor, commentaries and editorials were welcomed by readers in the printed paper whereas online discussion on forums were largely ignored because they were deemed to be time-consuming and trivial (p. 226). Again, a pattern emerges of the professional news organization taking control over audience actions by deciding what is and is not available and where it is available.

The results of Jack Rosenberry's (2005) research regarding online techniques to improve public communication in the realm of the newspaper supported the findings of Rebillard & Touboul (2010) and Skogerbø & Winsvold (2011). Rosenberry (2005) conducted content analysis of 47 online newspaper websites to find evidence of more interactive information exchange between newspaper professionals and their audience. What Rosenberry (2005) actually found was that online journalism did not change the producer and consumer relationship much

(p. 68). In fact, the online versions of the newspapers examined remained relatively traditional with 89 percent of the paper websites analyzed having space for letters to the editor, but few other opportunities for interactive communication (Rosenberry, 2005, p. 68), greatly perpetuating the gatekeeping history of the newspaper. Sites that did incorporate paper-sponsored forums, links between articles and comment boards, e-mail addresses for further communication and citizen blogs were in the minority (Rosenberry, 2005, p. 69). While Rosenberry's (2005) article is enlightening, it is worth mentioning that research conducted eight years ago is considered to be rather outdated in this fast moving news world. Nevertheless, his results are still informative.

Modality and Innovative Visual Story Forms

A later study by Spiro Kiouisis (2006), which investigated different iterations of an online news story from the mid-2000s, revealed that a distinction needed to be specified between the media content that was made available on newspaper websites and the actual use by the people visiting (p. 348). Kiouisis (2006) talked about modality - "the use of text, graphics, sound, and video on a single communication platform" - and how the multimedia formats that arise from the implementation of modality are more conducive to learning (p. 350). What is more effective? Text and graphics? Sound and video? Essentially, anything is ineffective if no one actually utilizes it. The impact of multimedia content is only strong when people actively make use of the available content (Kiouisis, 2006, p. 351). Kiouisis' research results (2006) illustrated that the inclusion of modality on newspaper websites did seem to increase audience use of multimedia elements (p. 354), meaning if the content is there, it is likelier that it will be used. However, despite that finding, Kiouisis (2006) still found importance in noting that even with the insertion of multimedia features onto a news website, there is no guarantee that readers will gravitate towards the online content and decide to interact with the features (p. 354). As Kiouisis (2006)

stated in the discussion section of his study, "viewers are not merely passive recipients of information. To impact their assessments, users must become actively engaged with the content" (p. 355).

Another important aspect of online newspapers is discussed in a study by Jennifer George-Palilonis and Mary Spillman (2011), which examined the potential usefulness of interactive graphics in storytelling. While their research did not focus on a range of interactive features, it did hone in on innovative visual story forms that newspaper websites should be using. They considered the theory behind the approach to nonlinear storytelling and how journalists may refine that in the future. They focused on the younger readers of news websites - the "digital natives" who are only just reaching their mid-twenties - and how they think about and process information, which is really fast (George-Palilonis & Spillman, 2011, p. 168). George-Palilonis and Spillman (2011) argued that the failure of journalists to create interactive graphics will lead these digital natives and other potential site visitors to seek content through other sources (p.168), simply because the newspaper websites, as they are currently presented, are not interesting enough. Their Interactive Graphics Development (IGD) framework was broken down into two phases, including the Story Evaluation and Story Form Selection. Story Evaluation is composed of three areas: news values, objectives and audience, while Story Form Selection has five types of interactive presentations: instructives, narratives, data visualizations, simulations, and serious games (George-Palilonis & Spillman, 2011, p. 169). Most important to the IGD framework is knowing when to implement certain types of interactive features. Newsrooms are obviously busy places and there are many stories to cover every day, but which ones should have interactive elements attached to them is a question that these researchers addressed.

As expected, George-Palilonis & Spillman (2011) stated that due to the time and effort involved in the production of most interactive graphics and features, importance should be placed

on significant stories - those that impact a great number of people - as well as on features that could have longevity - those that can sit on the site for a prolonged period of time and that people will come back to see more than once, perhaps a year or more later (p. 170). It is true that "audiences are increasingly drawn to content that is interactive, dynamic, immersive, and nonlinear" (George-Palilonis & Spillman, 2011, p. 175), but not everything a newspaper website produces needs to have an interactive element to it.

The conclusions of George-Palilonis and Spillman reinforced the earlier findings of Jennifer Greer and Donica Mensing (2004) in their longitudinal content analysis of the same group of newspapers over a seven year period (p. 99). What the two researchers found was that, within the study time period, online newspapers started "offering more of everything - content, multimedia, interactivity and revenue-generating features," and rather than discontinuing features as new ones became available, the newspaper website simply built on what they already had, further expanding the capabilities of their websites (Greer & Mensing, 2004, p. 108). The fact that online newspapers were grappling over ten years ago (when this study concluded) to find interactive online news features that worked well (Greer & Mensing, 2004, p. 109) is notable, because this issue is still of crucial importance today. Newspaper websites seem to tack on everything they possibly can in an effort to keep up with the other various media sources available, but they do so without really contemplating how this affects their audience and their readers' motivations to continue coming back to the site. This exploratory study of the *Edmonton Journal* website and how its readers are making use of the content and features available to them is a stepping stone towards this publication making proper use of its time and resources.

Today's online newspapers are still seeking a balance when it comes to reader involvement and in order to figure it out, the publications have to find out what exactly their site visitors want to see and do when they peruse newspaper web pages. It becomes more about

engaging in that two-way dialogue, so that newspapers know when it is appropriate to incorporate extra features that readers will actually use and enjoy, and when it should be deemed unnecessary.

RQ3: What type of dialogue and interaction do *Edmonton Journal* readers actually want to see on the newspaper website?

Overall, the literature in this subject area addresses the issues of: defining audience characteristics based on interactions with online news website features, degree of use and appreciation of site content by readers, barriers created by online news publications between themselves and their audience, and the need to understand when interactivity is best employed on newspaper websites. The most important findings from the research conducted are that studying frequency of interactive feature use by readers on newspaper websites can give us a sense of gratifications obtained, and that online news publications that take into account audience characteristics will probably have a better chance of sustaining readership because they cater to readers' needs, not just to what the newspaper thinks is best.

COMMUNICATION THEORY

The framework of this study will take the form of the uses and gratifications (U&G) theory to communication, which attempts to explain the use of media by looking at the active audience; taking into account their needs, motives and gratifications. The underlying assumption is that audience members actively seek out mass media to satisfy individual needs.

Developed from the Functionalist theory by Jay Blumler and Elihu Katz, the U&G tradition shifted the area of study from how media affects people to how people affect and use

media (Siraj, 2007, p. 399). This particular approach to communications became more prominent in the late 1950s and early 1960s when it attempted to replace the idea of audience members as passive victims of what they were being fed by programs, articles, films and songs and, instead, turn it around, so that this same media could be used to serve purposes dictated by the audience rather than the producer (Blumler, 1979, p. 10). As opposed to previous communications theories, U&G theory refuses to question what the media does to people and, instead, asks how people use the media for their own benefit (Swanson, 1979, p. 4). People are not drones who follow everything the media dictates; people can determine for themselves whether or not the media is able to gratify their needs for information and feelings of community. If certain media outlets serve no purpose to them, they will move on to one that does a better job of fulfilling their requirements.

According to Syed Abdul Siraj (2007), the theory "is currently regarded as one of the most effective" to increase our understanding of why the internet is so greatly used and to learn about the gratifications people derive from it since the core notion is "audience activity" (p. 403). Further to that, Mark Levy and Sven Windahl (1984) describe the theory by saying "this receiver-oriented concept postulates that, conditioned by social and psychological structures and within the constraints of available communications, individuals choose what communications settings they will enter" (p. 52).

John Galloway's (1981) expectancy model of audience U&G pushed the theory further by stating that if satisfaction is derived from media and media content then satisfaction becomes more expected of that media and highly valued; however, the opposite holds true whereby when gratifications that are expected and valued fail to be fulfilled, a decrease in the subsequent exposure to that particular media will occur because it no longer pleases the audience (p. 445).

Windahl focused on several of the most productive viewpoints of the U&G theory by synthesizing them into four areas: 1) peoples' behaviour is guided by the perceptions and expectations of media; 2) in addition to needs, external constraints as well as interests lead to motivation of the individual; 3) functional alternatives to media consumption exist; and 4) media content will dictate, to an extent, the effects of the media (as cited in Ruggiero, 2000, p. 11).

In addition, while the internet has made everything more accessible to the world in general, there has also been an added sense of personalization. Audiences can now tailor what they view online to their own selective tastes (Siraj, 2007, p. 404). Today, the ability to better track how people are making use of digital spaces gives creators of the digital realm more knowledge of the motivation behind audience reasoning, allowing the creators to cater to their audience more appropriately.

One of the ways they can cater more closely to audience needs and gratifications is to focus on the interactivity available on the website. Interactivity is one of the core components of the notion of the active user in the U&G theory of communication (Ruggiero, 2000, p. 15). Williams, Rice and Rogers used the definition of "the degree to which participants in the communication process have control over, and can exchange roles in their mutual discourse" as their idea of interactivity (as cited in Ruggiero, 2000, p. 15), a definition that fits well within the scope of this research project.

METHODOLOGY

This research project was based a cross-sectional research design whereby inferences about interactivity on the *Edmonton Journal* website were drawn from a sample of data collected at one point in time - between April and May of 2013.

Present in the study were the various features available on the *Edmonton Journal* website as the independent variables. The participants' attitudes and opinions of the website features were the dependent variables; responses from the audience were analyzed to see whether or not availability of interactive content on the website affected their use and appreciation.

For the opinions being studied, specific characteristics within the sample population were essential. This research required an audience who had visited the *Edmonton Journal* website on at least one or more occasions and could answer questions pertaining to interactive features and content available on the website. Because the *Edmonton Journal* has done no previous data gathering in this area, and there is currently little scholarly research on newspaper website interactivity available (and none in Canada), this was an exploratory study with a small sample population. The goal was to gather at minimum 50 responses. We sought out participants who fulfilled the requirement of site visitation and were at least 18 years of age or older. No other specific attributes (i.e. gender, employment, etc.) were used to filter out respondents.

To carry out this edmontonjournal.com site interactivity research project, it was determined it was best to use a mainly quantitative method of data collection due to time constraint issues on the part of the researcher. As well, a quantitative data gathering instrument would take participants less time to complete, meaning it would be more likely that they would be willing to complete the questionnaire. The majority of questions asked were of multiple choice design, with the occasional option to provide an "other" response. Several open-ended questions were also asked to provide a space for edmontonjournal.com visitors to mention anything else they felt was important, but perhaps had not been touched on within the rest of the questionnaire. The open-ended questions were made optional; if a respondent decided to click through to the next page they would be able to do so without being prompted to put in an answer before moving forward. However, this was not stated within the instructions to the question as it was thought

that revealing this might make participants less likely to provide any response at all. It was assumed that the open-ended questions might not garner many responses, but it was hoped that some participants would opt to leave additional information, giving us richer data in the long run.

In terms of instrumentation, the survey was created online using fluidsurveys.com, a Canadian-based system that provides questionnaire templates that can easily be modified to meet user needs. Other methods of administering a survey and the reported disadvantages of using an e-questionnaire are discussed in several articles which informed our survey design and the wording of questions. One such example is Martine Van Selm and Nicholas W. Jankowski's (2006) mention of the online survey's seeming appearance of lengthiness compared to a print survey due to the fact that one average print page can often equal the space of several computer screens (p. 441). While that can be the case at times, during the creation of the survey we were careful to keep the number of questions close to a total of 20 to keep completion time at a minimum (the fluidsurveys.com metrics estimated that the survey would take less than 5 minutes to complete). The majority of questions asked also required just a quick click of a button as opposed to full typed responses usually required in open-ended questions. The survey questions were grouped into topics and the topics split into separate pages to make each section seem short, rather than allowing the respondents to see all the questions on one page, which can seem rather daunting. Other limitations of online data collection include the concern of multiple responses from the same person as well as the worry of failing to reach the intended target population (Lefever, Dal & Matthíasdóttir, 2007, p. 576). However, referring to our study, these disadvantages were of minimal concern. The fear of one person or multiple respondents posing as different people to answer the same survey was unlikely. While the survey allowed for multiple responses from the same computer, there really was no incentive for a participant to take part more than once. It was made clear in the introduction letter of the survey that this research was

being conducted as an exploratory study for a final research project in a university Masters program. The only incentive to participate was the chance to voice their opinion on the website in question and the possibility of improvements to the site. As for the issue of ensuring that the survey would be able to target the necessary participants, I, as the researcher, avoided dealing directly with e-mail addresses and used a generic link to the survey on all the social media networks that were accessed. While that was not guaranteed to bring the audience needed, because I was using online networks to share the link, I was at least more likely to find edmontonjournal.com readers through this process than I would have if I had done a mail out print survey because I already knew that anyone who saw the posted message on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn or through an e-mail from someone would be a regular Internet user who would be familiar and comfortable with the processes involved in participating in an online survey. While the probability was high of someone missing a posted message because it had moved down on their social media newsfeeds by the time they checked, the ability of those who saw the link to share it however they chose certainly helped, and the reminders that I posted online also proved useful as the metrics on fluidsurveys.com showed another spike in responses after the reminder messages were shared on those social media sites.

Edward J. Alessi and James I. Martin (2010) discussed the researcher's inability to track true response rates through an e-survey (p. 126). They cautioned that because it was impossible to know how many individuals had actually seen the announcement of the study in its various forms and chose not to participate, the actual response rate for an e-questionnaire is indeterminable. Although that is accurate, it does not actually hamper this method of recruitment. Fluidsurveys.com was able to track how many people started answering the questionnaire and either had the survey terminated because they were unqualified, ended the survey on their own, or completed it. What was important was that the site chosen to administer the questionnaire

provided a real-time view of how many responses had been gathered and how many more were needed, so that we could keep abreast of the response numbers and make sure to ramp up recruitment again if participation slowed down. That aided us in reaching our goal of 50 responses. The number of people who saw the invitation and decided not to take part was beside the point in this case and was not a disadvantage for this study. The features within the web-based survey system that were chosen for this study made management of the questionnaire much easier and provided an advantage that would not have been possible with other distribution methods, such as paper (Bertot, 2009, p. 122).

A further advantage that we felt would greatly benefit this particular study included the ability of those who saw the survey information posted on Facebook or Twitter to forward it to others, thereby making use of snowball recruitment (Hunter, 2012, p. 16). For this survey, a few media-savvy professional colleagues were recruited to share the link with their friends, family, colleagues and followers in whatever method they chose, preferably making use of a social media network though. Immediately upon my initial tweet on Twitter, in addition to the three colleagues that I had spoken to about helping me to spread the news of my study, a number of my other connections retweeted my message and link to their followers without any prompting.

Furthermore, Van Selm and Jankowski (2006) made note of advantages mentioned in other literature about the use of online surveys as a method for data collection, stating that e-questionnaires remove interviewer bias, avoid the need for time consuming data entry, and provide increased convenience for the respondents (p. 438). Regarding the first point, it can be argued that interviewer bias can still play a role in a self-completion survey such as the one used in this study. However, with careful construction of questions in terms of wording, it is possible to tone down or eliminate bias altogether on the part of the researcher, which is what was attempted in this study with the extensive amount of editing and piloting of the survey prior to

distribution. The second advantage is certainly true when it comes to online survey systems, such as fluidsurveys.com. All of the information was stored on the website as participants submitted their surveys. Analysis is simplified because everything that is collected can be transferred to a spreadsheet automatically, eliminating the need to code the raw data. With responses categorized by question and the ability to filter information with just a few clicks, the process of examining the results is very efficient. Lastly, online questionnaires, like paper surveys, allow respondents to take part at their own pace and at a time of their choosing. Unlike an in-person interview where there is decidedly more effort required by both the interviewer and interviewee, an e-survey can be opened up by participants and completed whenever they feel they can. As evidence, for this study, the average estimated survey completion time based on the metrics provided by fluidsurveys.com was less than 5 minutes. The median time was just over 5 minutes while the average time was closer to 9 minutes. The higher average is because, while some participants actually required less time than even the survey site estimated, other respondents needed 35 to 50 minutes to finish and submit their surveys. The reason for the lengthy amount of time these respondents required is unknown, but it is not difficult to assume that perhaps they had to step away from their computer to deal with something at home. If that is the case, obviously, the online self-completion survey allowed them to do that and return to the survey without any issues, so they were willing to finish the questionnaire when they found the time to do so.

As can be seen, many of the disadvantages that may have plagued e-questionnaires as a legitimate survey tool in the past no longer apply. In this case, at least, with careful planning, the advantages outweighed any potential issues that could have arisen with the distribution of the survey and throughout the data collection period.

The survey was constructed with a cover letter stating the affiliation of the survey with the University of Alberta as part of a student final research project (see Appendix A). The cover

letter provided a quick overview of the reason for conducting the research, how the data would be used, how the information would be stored and what the project hoped to accomplish. It also included contact information for both the student running the study as well as the faculty supervisor of the project. Past the cover letter, the survey was split into several pages with questions separated by subject (see Appendix B for a full copy of the survey).

Multiple paper-copy drafts of the questionnaire were created as we strove to limit the instrument in length and to include only the most pertinent questions. The original draft of the survey was created with the help of the project supervisor, who during the duration of ethics approval also had other university faculty members review the paper-copy document. Feedback was provided throughout this process and modifications to the wording and order of the questions were made. Once the University Research Ethics Board (REB) approved the project, the survey was then designed on the fluidsurveys.com website. Unfortunately, the free service on the site could not accommodate what we wished to do. As such, a student plan was purchased and we were then able to extend the survey to the number of questions needed and were given greater functionality with regards to types of questions and responses that could be used and setting of optional or non-optional questions. The one thing unfortunately lacking in this particular package purchased was the ability to build in "jump logic," which allows for question construction in which certain responses automatically take the participant to the proper follow-up question. To compensate for that missing feature, instructions were provided in-text throughout the survey. For example, in question 8, if a respondent answered with "I do not share," in brackets next to that response was an instruction to skip to question 10 (see Appendix B).

Once the survey was mounted on fluidsurveys.com in the form it would be seen by actual participants, it was subjected to rigorous pilot testing. A special access link was sent to professional colleagues, friends and family: twenty people took part in the pilot version of the

survey and provided ample feedback. Most had no issues with the survey. However, a few people mentioned adding additional response options that they would have liked to have seen on several questions. There was also a suggestion to add in another set of questions regarding other news websites for comparison purposes. The comments were extremely useful and helped us to clarify words used and to hone the survey to just the necessary questions.

In the initial planning stages of the research, survey distribution was to be accomplished through the *Edmonton Journal* subscriber database. However, for various corporate and privacy reasons, this was not possible. Distribution through my extensive social media networks was deemed to be a viable alternative method to meet the goal of collecting 50 responses.

It was decided that to maintain an arm's length relationship with participants when collecting data, I could post a tweet on my Twitter feed with a brief message and a direct link to the survey in the hopes that my followers would see it and choose to click the link to participate (see Appendix C). A similar, but lengthier message was also posted on my Facebook page, but it was not directly shared with any particular person, it was simply posted as a status update with the assumption that my Facebook friends might see it on their newsfeeds (see Appendix C). In order to reach out to people who are known to be edmontonjournal.com visitors, a message and link to the electronic questionnaire was also posted on the *Edmonton Journal* Facebook page using my personal Facebook account. Since I was doing so as a follower of the page without identifying myself as a staff member of the *Edmonton Journal*, this recruitment action was deemed to be appropriate by the University REB. The link used in each of these instances was the same; none of the links that were sent out in the mass invites were personalized in any way. This measure was taken so that there would be no way of connecting a specific individual to a particular survey when they clicked the link to the questionnaire, thereby keeping him or her anonymous.

Completion of the survey constituted the respondents' consent to participate, as stated in the cover letter. Anonymity was protected because respondents would only be known by an ID number - no actual names or e-mails were collected - and all data remained within the bounds of the researcher and supervisor of the project.

Preparation of the survey and pilot testing required approximately one month. Once the survey was ready for deployment, invitations were sent out as planned and the questionnaire ran online through fluidsurveys.com for a period of three and a half weeks. At the two week mark, a total of 45 completed questionnaires had been submitted by participants. Since another five complete responses were required to reach the total goal of 50, messages were posted again on Twitter, my personal Facebook page and on the *Edmonton Journal* Facebook page to remind people that the survey was still running and to invite responses. This re-posting also served as another chance to reach out to those who may not have seen the first post in their newsfeed or on the *Edmonton Journal* Facebook page when it was originally shared. Fifty-one responses were gathered before the four week mark.

Since the coding of the data collected was automatically done through the survey website, data analysis took significantly less time to conduct than would have been the case with a paper survey. Over a period of about three weeks, the variables were analysed and the results compared. The findings and discussion of the outcomes are covered below.

ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

As discussed in the methodology section earlier, the questionnaire was created through fluidsurveys.com, which is an online survey software that allows the user to build the survey step-by-step. As the survey runs, the site monitors statistics including number of responses, completion rate, average completion time and average number of responses per day. When the

survey is closed, the analysis feature can be used to view the responses directly on the site or the responses can be exported into an Excel document for ease of use. The site can also take the data collected on each survey and apply them to reports that show the information in bar chart, pie chart and table form depending on the question.

When this survey closed, I opted to export the data into an Excel file. Questions appeared at the top of each column with responses for each running below. The respondents were coded from numbers 2 to 52 as the top row of the Excel document lists the headers for each column. As Excel allows for filtering by response, each column in the file was set for that function and was used as a way to more easily count the number of like responses as well as a way to compare variables, for example, filtering for females and then also filtering females down to those who use a smart phone. Because this feature was available in Excel, and because the sample population was small in number, it was not necessary to create a special coding system. To interpret the data on the close-ended questions, I reviewed how the different demographic groups responded to each question and compared variables between the groups to see if any interesting correlations might exist. Because this is an exploratory study with a small sample of participants, the patterns seen in the data and the interpretations of relationships between the variables cannot be generalized to the general population of edmontonjournal.com users.

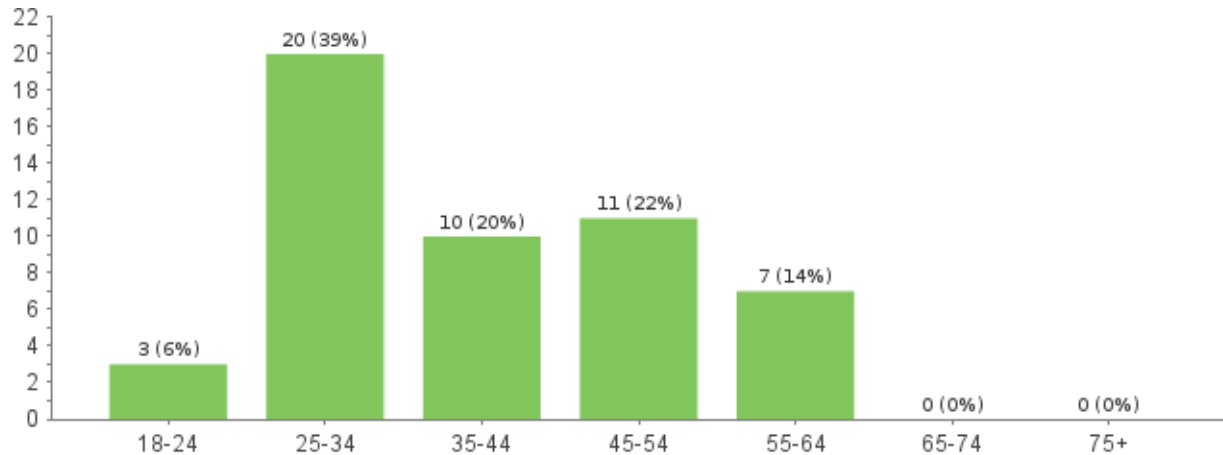
To analyze the open-ended questions, the responses of those who opted to leave additional information were gathered into a separate Word document and numbered based on their code in the Excel file. The responses were not altered in any way for spelling, grammar or punctuation. After each answer was read thoroughly, like responses were highlighted in different colours to differentiate recurring themes that were either worded similarly to one another or were stated in another way, but interpreted to have a parallel meaning. A tag cloud showing the major themes of the open-ended responses was created through fluidsurveys.com.

FINDINGS

The survey opened on Apr. 6, 2013 and closed at the beginning of May after meeting the goal of 50 participants at the end of April. The survey yielded a total of 51 complete responses. All of these participants had previously accessed the edmontonjournal.com site through their web browser. If the respondents had not, and they answered so with question 2 (see Appendix B), the questionnaire ended and they would not be able to continue with the remainder of the survey. Statistics from the fluidsurveys.com website showed that although the survey was estimated to take participants less than five minutes to complete, the average amount of time spent was over eight and a half minutes. The completion rate of the survey was 71% as 51 of the 72 people who started answering the questionnaire completed it in its entirety. Ten of the 21 people who did not complete the survey had their survey terminated because they did not meet the criteria of being an edmontonjournal.com reader, while the other 11 were listed as incomplete. The reason for those 11 surveys being left unfinished is unknown.

Demographics

The majority of respondents were in the lower age ranges with three people between the ages of 18 to 24, twenty between the ages of 25 to 34 and ten between the ages of 34 to 44 (see Graph 1). Eleven were in the 45 to 54 range and seven in the 55 to 64 range. None of the participants were over the age of 64, which could be a result of the manner the survey was distributed - sharing of the link through social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn may have contributed to attracting a slightly younger age group.

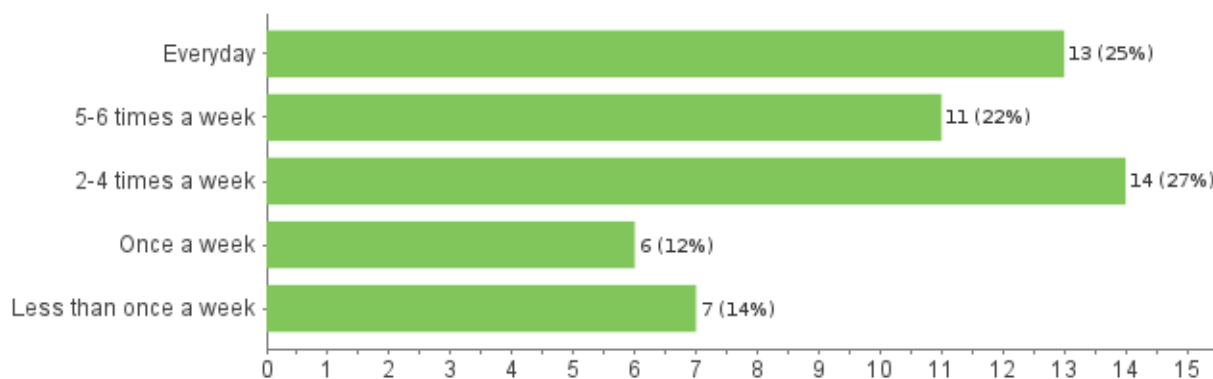


Graph 1: Age of survey respondents (n=51)

There was a good mix in terms of gender: 24 males (47%) and 27 females (53%) completed the survey, making it relatively balanced, so that the responses are not skewed towards the opinions of a specific sex.

When looking at respondents' current employment status, 44 of the 51 participants are employed, two are unemployed, four are retired (early retirement judging by their ages) and seven are students. Because the question asked for respondents to check all work situations that apply, there was overlap, and the numbers total more than 51. The majority of those who said they are students are also employed to some degree.

In question 3, respondents were asked how many times they visited edmontonjournal.com during a week. Thirty-eight of the 51 respondents stated that they accessed the website at least twice a week with 14 visiting two to four times, 11 visiting five to six times and 13 visiting everyday (see Graph 2).



Graph 2: In an average week, how often do you visit edmontonjournal.com? (n=51)

Frequency and Length of Site Visitation

It seems that most of the respondents made use of the website in snippets, with visits lasting no more than 30 minutes each time. Twenty-two of the respondents said they spend a total of 10 to 30 minutes per visit on edmontonjournal.com, while 28 said they spend less than 10 minutes. Only one person answered in question 4 that on average he spends a total of 31 minutes to an hour on the site during each visit.

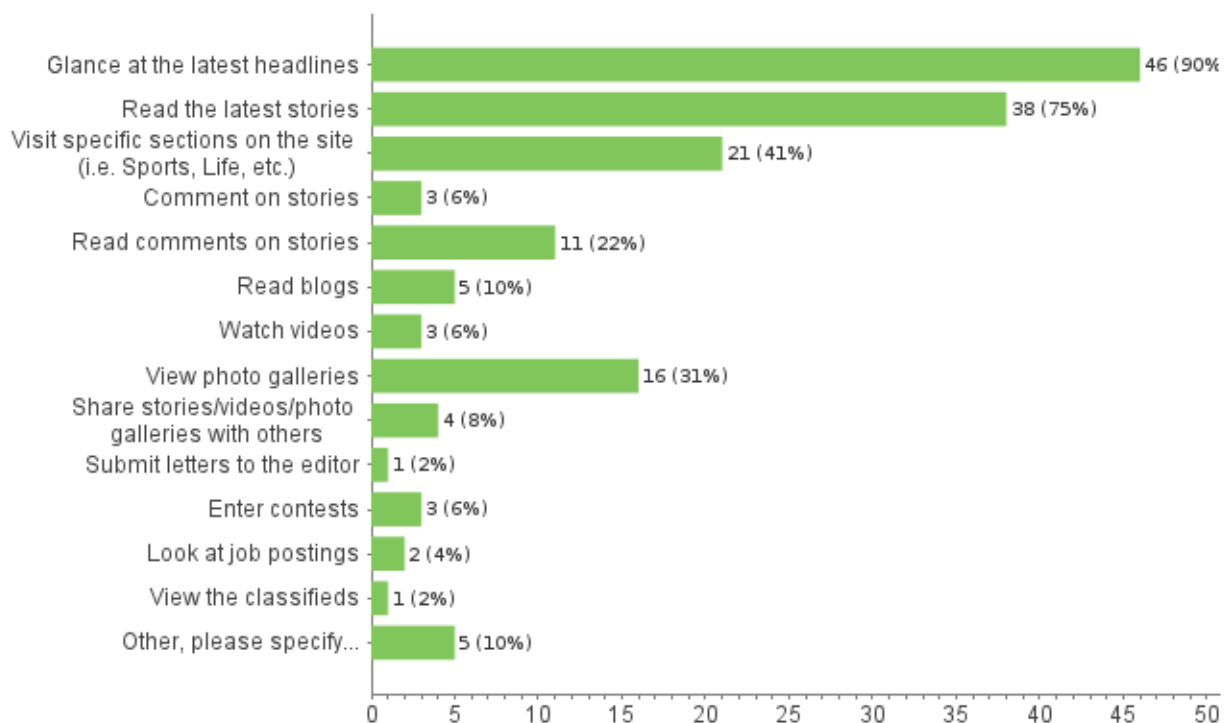
Question 5 asked respondents to answer when they more frequently visit edmontonjournal.com - weekdays (Monday to Friday) or weekends (Saturday and Sunday). The vast majority, 46 of the 51 participants, said they tend to visit the site on weekdays. One respondent mentioned later in the survey in an open-ended response field that he felt that it was impossible to properly answer this question since he had responded with "everyday" in question 3. Should a survey similar to this one be used in future research projects it is suggested that the question either be removed or reworded, so that the interpretation of the question is more clear-cut.

The subsequent question of time of day when participants most often visited the *Journal* website - daytime (5 a.m. to 5:59 p.m.) or evening (6 p.m. or later) - revealed that a majority of

43 of 51 respondents said they more frequently visit the website during the daytime. This leads one to believe that since the majority of the participants are employed, they are likely looking at this news website in their work environment as opposed to the comfort of their own home.

Readers' Actions on the Website

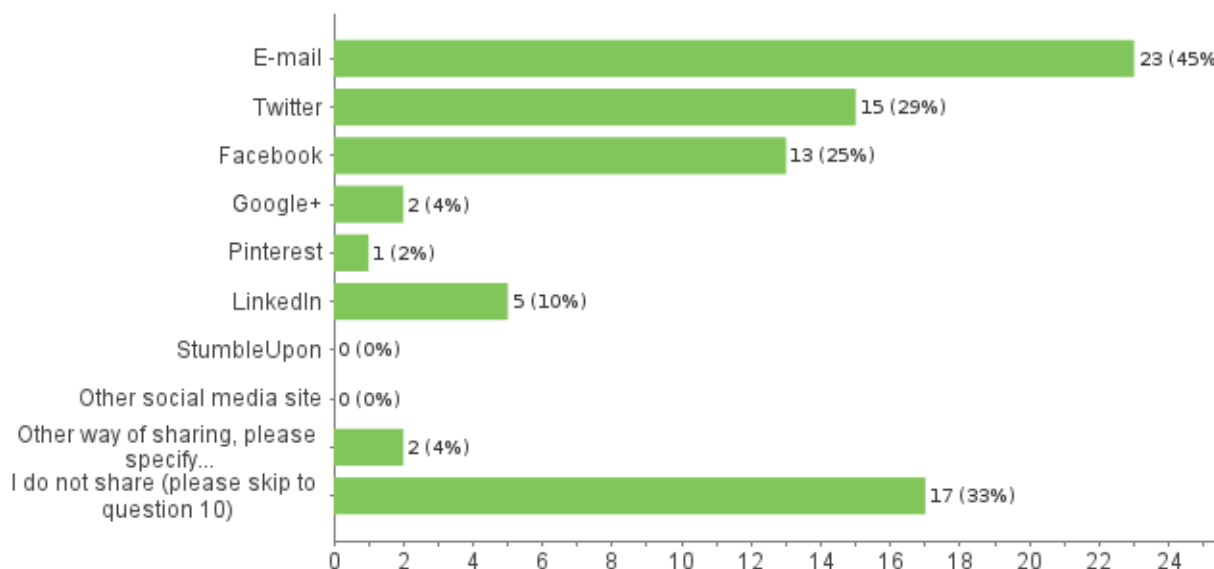
When asked in question 7 what they typically do when they visit edmontonjournal.com (see Graph 3), several of the answers were much more popular than the others. The top five responses were: "glance at the latest headlines" with 46, "read the latest stories" with 38, "visit specific sections on the site (i.e. Sports, Life, etc.)" with 21, "view photo galleries" with 16 and "read comments on stories" with 11. Because participants could choose more than one response for this question, it is highly likely that the majority who answered "glance at the latest headlines" also answered with one of the other top five responses. The top choices show that the majority of respondents are not necessarily active participants when it comes to website interactivity. They tend to be passive, just reading or looking at the contributions of others instead of taking the time to add their own thoughts to the mix. Overall, the average number of choices each person made was just over three.



Graph 3: What do you typically do when you visit edmontonjournal.com? (n=51)

Sharing Items Found

In question 8, 17 of the 51 respondents said they do not share stories/news videos/photo galleries/links from edmontonjournal.com (see Graph 4). Yet, of the other 34 who do, 23 said they share through e-mail, 15 said they share through Twitter and 13 said they share through Facebook. Interestingly, one respondent said he used another way of sharing and when asked to specify, he stated he did so orally, meaning that in addition to e-mail, Twitter and Facebook, he still feels compelled to share with someone through verbal or face-to-face communication at times. This question could be answered with multiple responses.



Graph 4: If you share stories/news videos/photo galleries/links from edmontonjournal.com, how do you do it? (n=51)

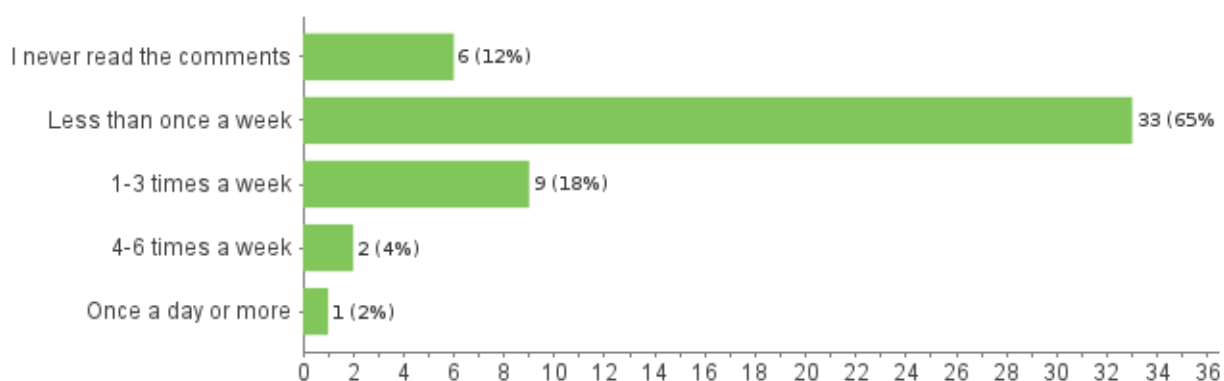
Question 9 delved into the reasoning behind the need to share stories/news videos/photo galleries/links found on edmontonjournal.com. The survey asked when respondents most often wanted to share these types of items and looking at the responses of those who were able to answer this question (the 17 who said they "did not share" in question 8 skipped to question 10), 22 of the 34 participants said they did so when the items were "interesting". The idea of material being interesting is subjective, however, more than half of the respondents must find the content on edmontonjournal.com compelling enough for them to share. Two respondents opted to specify other reasons for sharing. One mentioned that discovering unique stories that other newspapers have yet to cover often prompts her to share, while the other said that the decision to share depended on the person she was sharing the item with. The item could be interesting, useful, entertaining, contain new information or be well written - a number of possibilities, not necessarily one specific reason. Due to previously noted restrictions with jump logic in the

fluidsurveys.com program, three respondents who should have skipped this question submitted responses, giving a total of 37 respondents instead of 34.

Commenting on Stories

An overwhelming majority of 45 of the 51 respondents answered question 10 by saying they never comment on stories read on edmontonjournal.com. That is, 88% of the participants are not active on the comment boards. Only six respondents said they comment and all of them did so less than once a week, meaning this sample group is very inactive on the site.

Question 11 presented the reverse side of the comment equation. When asked how often they read comments posted by others on edmontonjournal.com, 33 of 51 respondents stated they did read the comments, although less than once a week (see Graph 5). That's 65% of the respondents who do so on occasion. Another nine stated they read comments from others one to three times a week, two said they do so four to six times a week and one person said they do so at least once a day. A total of 46 people (88%) are actively reading comments, likely as a way to see different viewpoints on different subject matters.



Graph 5: How often do you read the comments posted by others on edmontonjournal.com? (n=51)

Next, in question 12, respondents were asked if there had ever been a story they had wanted to comment on, but were unable to do so because the comment function was not available for that story. This was asked as it was noticed that edmontonjournal.com does not open up the commenting function for every story that is posted. It is not known why that is the case: no pattern regarding particular subject matter nor degree of controversy could be discerned amongst comment-function and non comment-function stories, so perhaps the decision is based on the fact that hundreds of comment-function enabled stories per day would mean too much to moderate. The stories that lack the feature are not necessarily the most controversial, but perhaps the controversial stories are the ones where it would be best to open the commenting feature. This question sought to find out if readers would have posted comments had the story they were interested in had the option to do so. Forty-one of 51 respondents said that they had never come across the issue. However, 10 of the participants said that, yes, in the past they had found a story they wanted to comment on, but were unable to. That is four more people than the six that said they comment less than once a week in question 10, begging the question, do people not comment because they are not given the means to do so, or because they really just have no interest in commenting in the first place?

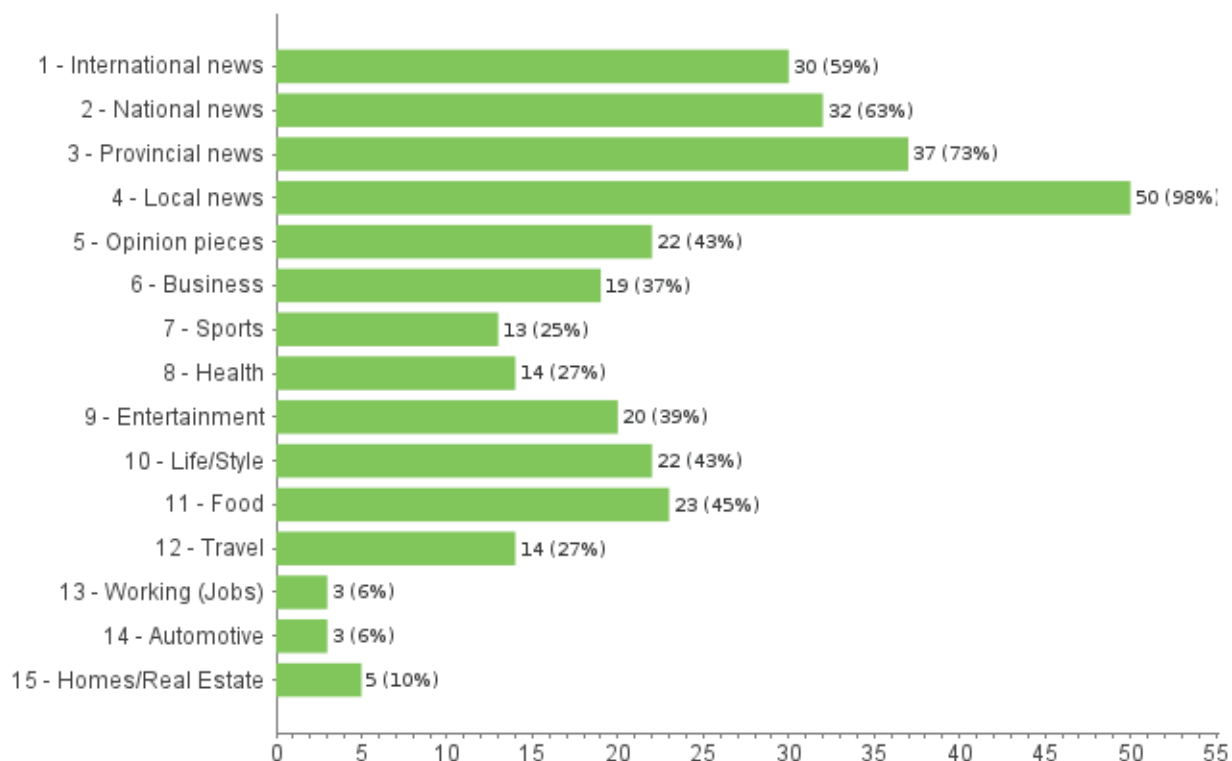
Viewing Videos

In addition to the stories and commenting features, edmontonjournal.com, being a website, allows for multimedia presentation, including news videos. Question 13 explored the main reason why participants took the time to view them. Almost half of the respondents (24 of 51) stated that they never watch them. However, 13 participants said they watched the videos because they show visually what the story is talking about, seven chose the response "they give additional insight" and another seven stated that the videos provide a quick synopsis of the

written story. While this is a mix of answers, we can see that these visitors to edmontonjournal.com like to learn through various means and, if the option is there, some of them will opt to seek out visual representation in place of the written word or as an addition to a printed story.

Preferred Content of Articles Read

Question 14 delved into what types of articles on edmontonjournal.com attracted the attention of the respondents. They were asked to check off all of their choices. The top five categories/sections were local news (98%), provincial news (73%), national news (63%), international news (59%) and food (45%) (see Graph 6 for the full results.) As this shows, edmontonjournal.com is seen primarily as a news site that provides local news to keep readers informed of city happenings. The site is also deemed relevant for news across Canada as well as internationally. While it may not be top of mind for those who participated, it is also seen as a source for opinion pieces and information on entertainment, life/style, food and business.



Graph 6: What are the types of articles that attract your attention and get you to read the full story on edmontonjournal.com? (n=51)

When asked in the subsequent question which of those topics in question 14 were their top two choices, local news still came out on top with 27 of 51 participants stating that those are the types of articles to grab their attention first. Another seven said local news was the second type of article to attract them. Provincial news came in second with three respondents picking it as their first choice and 13 choosing it as their second choice. Opinion pieces came in third place with five participants listing it as their number one pick and another seven saying it was their second. International news was fourth on the list with nine choosing those types of news articles as their top priority and two more participants stating it was their second. National news rounded out the top five types of articles with one participant opting to put that choice first and eight more participants placing international news as their second choice.

Reasons for Visiting Edmontonjournal.com

When choosing the reasons for visiting edmontonjournal.com in question 16, respondents were given the option of providing more than one response. The most popular response was that "the newspaper keeps me up-to-date on issues that interest me" with a total of 33 of the 51 people opting for that answer (see Table 1). Twenty-one respondents feel that reading edmontonjournal.com is their civic responsibility because the site keeps them informed on issues and happenings around them, while 21 said that they visited edmontonjournal.com because breaking stories are constantly updated online. This very much shows that people read news online firstly for up-to-date information and secondly because they feel that the news website brings them closer to their community and helps to make them more responsible citizens.


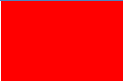







Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
1 - This newspaper keeps me up-to-date on issues that interest me		65%	33
2 - This newspaper has interesting columns and editorials		37%	19
3 - Reading this newspaper makes me feel more a part of my community		33%	17
4 - It's my civic responsibility to keep informed on issues and happenings around me		41%	21
5 - Reading the newspaper online means learning about news in a variety of ways (i.e. through galleries or videos)		12%	6
6 - When I find stories I like, it's easy to share these online stories with others		20%	10
7 - Breaking stories are constantly updated when I read them online		41%	21
8 - It's a habit/been doing it for a long time		25%	13
9 - None of these		16%	8
n=51			

Table 1: What are the reasons you visit edmontonjournal.com?

Question 17 asked participants to name their top two reasons for visiting edmontonjournal.com based on their responses in question 16. The number one reason was again "this newspaper keeps me up-to-date on issues that interest me" with 26 of the 51 respondents choosing this as either their first or second choice. This question presented a slight issue once again in that those who answered question 16 with a response of "none of these" reasons were still asked to answer question 17; a better plan would have been to have those nine participants skip to question 18, since question 17 would be null and void for them.

Other Online News Publications

In order to gauge the importance to the participants of receiving news in general, question 18 asked what other local news websites they regularly visit. A list of several sites was provided with the option for the participants to list others in an open-ended response. Respondents were also allowed to choose more than one answer. Twenty-four listed CBC Edmonton, 14 said Global Edmonton, and 11 selected main rival local print publication's website, The Edmonton Sun. Nine participants opted to add other websites not provided in the preset list, including: the Globe & Mail (2), the National Post, 24 Hours, BBC, Alberta Venture, Alberta Diary, and reddit.com. One respondent said she reads the websites of Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal papers as she now lives in Ontario; however, she is still keeping informed of news in Edmonton by viewing edmontonjournal.com.

Delving more deeply, question 19 asked respondents what they like about those other websites that they would like to see incorporated on edmontonjournal.com. In other words, what can make the edmontonjournal.com website better? Among other things, mentioned a few times in the open-ended responses (see Appendix D for full quotes) was that the other sites were easier

to navigate and that they provided a wider variety of viewpoints on the topics at hand. These opinions will be examined in more depth within the analysis section of the paper.

Platforms Used to Access Site

In the digital world we live in today, the platform used to access websites is becoming more and more important. The purpose of question 20 was to discover what the preferred platform seems to be for those who visit edmontonjournal.com. Surprisingly, 22 of the 51 participants said they use a desktop computer to access the site. When taken with the responses from question 5, 6 and 23, it would seem that many of the respondents are perusing edmontonjournal.com during the daytime on weekdays likely from their office computers whenever they have a moment. Eleven are using the site from a tablet, nine from a smart phone and another nine from a laptop computer. It seems that viewing of news websites is moving slowly towards more mobile mediums, but for many the act of accessing a news website is still a relatively stationary action. And, although people may be using their laptops, tablets and smart phones to view the sites, it does not necessarily mean they are doing so from outside of their home while on the go.

An open-ended response field was provided for question 21 which asked for additional comments about any aspect of edmontonjournal.com. The full responses provided by 16 of the 51 participants are shown in Appendix E. Themes that emerged will be discussed thoroughly later in the analysis section.

ANALYSIS

Males versus Females

Although it is hard to say in an exploratory study with a relatively small sample size of participants whether or not gender plays a role in how people responded and how they make use of interactive features on news websites, noteworthy gender-related data emerged from the results of this questionnaire.

Preferred Types of Articles

On question 14, 15 of the 27 females said they were attracted to articles about life/style and food. Only seven of 24 males marked an interest in articles about life/style and eight checked off the food category. Men seemed to be mostly invested in international, national, provincial and local news, although 10 stated they like opinion pieces and articles relating to business. Twelve of the 27 females also indicated an interest in opinion pieces, therefore, it looks like males and females, at least in this particular survey have approximately an equal likelihood of viewing those pages online at edmontonjournal.com. Females are less likely to look into the business section with only nine of them stating they were attracted to articles of that nature. While this may not seem immediately relevant to the topic of newspaper website interactivity, worth noting is that the information gathered about the site audience and where their interests lie will help the publication determine future focus for placement of more interactive features.

Accessing Video Clips and Viewing Photo Galleries

Sixteen of 27 females stated that they watch the videos on the website, while 11 of the 24 males who responded said they watch the videos. Although this is a small group, it would be interesting to see with a larger sample of participants whether or not gender has anything to do

with likelihood of interest in viewing videos. In addition to the data gathered from question 13 on videos, in question 7 only one of the 24 males said he typically watches videos when he visits edmontonjournal.com and only two of the 27 females said the same. Based on the responses on question 13, we can see that more than half of the respondents do watch the videos and while they may not do so frequently enough to say they "typically" watch videos when they visit, it is worth looking into further. The same goes for photo galleries. When asked in question 7 what they typically do when they visit edmontonjournal.com, in contrast to just the two females who said they view the videos, 10 females stated that they look through the photo galleries. Only six males said the same thing. Although there is a slight difference in the ratio of female to male respondents in the survey, again, because this is a small group and there is such a gap, it would be interesting to see if viewing videos and photo galleries is more of a female preference than a male one. With that knowledge, should any conclusive information come about from further study, newspaper websites can gear topics, subjects and themes of those interactive features towards the gender that more typically makes use of them.

Reading and Commenting on Stories

In question 7, eight of the 24 males stated that they typically read comments on stories when they visit edmontonjournal.com. This is in contrast to the female demographic in which only three of the 27 females said they tend to read comments on stories when they visit the website. Further to that, the three females who checked the "read comments" choice actually do so less frequently than the males with one female saying she read comments on stories less than once a week and two of them saying they read comments on stories one to three times per week. Of the eight males, only two said they read comments on stories less than once a week, four said

they did so one to three times per week and two said four to six times per week. For future research it would be useful to determine what kind of articles readers tend to comment on.

This survey asked the types of articles people were interested in reading and the majority, of course, this being a news website, checked off international news, national news, provincial news and local news on question 14. However, the survey did not dig further to find out what the topic of those particular news articles tend to be. Which ones do they usually like to comment on or read comments about? Are they related to politics, society, crime, disaster, business, city development, etc.? Perhaps if that was determined, newspaper website editors would have a better idea of which stories should have commenting made available because, as the survey found in question 12, there have been stories in which respondents wanted to leave a comment, but were unable to because the function was not provided. Although most of the participants said they have never come across an article they wanted to comment on and could not do so, there were still seven of 24 males who said that, yes, that had happened to them and three of 27 females who said the same, which means out of the thousands of people who visit edmontonjournal.com every day, there must be a larger group who feel similarly.

One other interesting note about the act of commenting on the website is that one of the females who stated on question 12 that she wanted to comment on a story but was unable to due to the feature being unavailable had said in questions 10 and 11 that she never comments on stories she reads on the site and she never reads the comments posted by others. If the newspaper sites are made aware of the fact that commenting should be opened for all stories, perhaps readers like this female would participate more on the website and contribute his or her thoughts on the articles. This same female also made a note about the edmontonjournal.com site in particular on question 21, which was an open-ended question looking for any additional insights. She mentioned that she preferred the old commenting system prior to edmontonjournal.com switching

to the use of Facebook's commenting interface. She says that Facebook is something she is not signed up for. Therefore, she is unable to participate. If this was brought to the attention of the paper through academic studies, perhaps the publication would be willing to change the interface used for commenting, so that it is more open and democratic and not available only to those who make use of this one social media network.

Time Spent on Site and Frequency of Visitation

The male responses were almost equally split between two time choices regarding the number of minutes spent on each visit to the site. Twelve said they spend on average 10-30 minutes, while 11 said they spend less than 10 minutes per visit. One person stated that he spends 31 minutes to an hour on the site when he visits. However, the latter said, in the previous question (Q3), that he visits edmontonjournal.com less than once a week, so it makes sense that when he visits, he does so for a longer period because he is likely catching up on multiple news stories at once rather than visiting to get updates more frequently. Those males that visit in spurts of 10 minutes or less tend to go to edmontonjournal.com at least twice a week with four of the 12 saying they visit two to four times a week, three of the 12 saying they visit five to six times a week and three of the 12 saying they visit every day. Only one of the 12 said he visits less than once a week, so it seems like the more frequently they access the site, the less time they spend per visit. With the females, 17 of the 27 said they spend less than 10 minutes on the site per visit, while 10 of the 27 said they visit for durations of 10-30 minutes each time they access edmontonjournal.com. Unlike the males who were more evenly dispersed with regards to frequency of edmontonjournal.com use, the females skew more towards shorter visits. While not much of a pattern could be discerned with those females who spend 10-30 minutes on the site per visit as the numbers were about equal in terms of frequency of visitation (two of 10 visiting less

than once a week, one of 10 visiting once a week, two of 10 visiting two to four times a week, one visiting five to six times a week and four visiting everyday), it seems that like the male respondents, those females who spend less than 10 minutes at a time on edmontonjournal.com usually visit more frequently with 12 of the 17 of them accessing this news website two or more times per week, and seven of these 12 visiting at least five times per week.

Platform Utilized to Access Site

On question 20, which asked about the type of device participants typically use to access edmontonjournal.com, 14 of the 27 females stated they used desktop computers, while 13 more often use what would be considered to be more mobile devices. On the other hand, only a third of the male respondents said they tend to access this news website from desktop computers. The other two-thirds use some sort of mobile digital device: 11 prefer to use their smart phones or tablets, arguably the most convenient mobile devices listed. This would be worth looking into further. Does this mean that men are more prone to using newer technology? Would it be better to gear updating of articles and frontline articles so that they skew towards the interests of males instead of females on the *Edmonton Journal's* mobile-optimized website, smart phone app and tablet app?

Age-Related Findings

When it comes to the use of the Internet, age can be a determining factor in content preferences and sites visited. This study found that this particular online news publication is no different from other websites in that age plays a role in what readers choose to do when on the site.

Reasons for Visiting

Nine participants of the 23 aged 18-34 answered question 16 by marking that they visit edmontonjournal.com because it is their civic responsibility to keep informed on issues and happenings around them. While that is less than half of the respondents within that age group, it is interesting to note that a sizable contingent from that younger age range see keeping abreast of news through their local newspaper's website as a duty. Half of the participants between the ages of 35-44 also checked off visiting edmontonjournal.com as a civic responsibility and seven of the 17 between the ages of 45-54 and 55-64 said the same. While it seems like there are relatively equal fractions of those who see reading edmontonjournal.com as their civic responsibility within the age ranges, it seems the younger to middle-aged respondents are more prone than older respondents to thinking of the website as a way to stay involved in their community. In contrast to those 45-54 and 55-64 where only five of the 18 participants stated that they visit edmontonjournal.com because it makes them feel more a part of their community, seven of 10 participants aged 35-44 checked off that choice. This 34-44 age group was the only group in which more than half of the participants opted to respond that this local newspaper website plays a role in how close they feel to the stories and people that make up the city. I found this to be surprising as I would have thought that those in the older age ranges would have been more likely to state this. Further research to explore how age may affect feelings of community when it comes to newspaper websites is recommended. This exploratory study seems to indicate that edmontonjournal.com is seen as a tool for community involvement by those who are settling into adulthood, have families and likely young children and established careers. The results may provide useful information to guide newspaper websites in their creation of supplementary sections or stories of interest to specific age groups that are seeking out that particular feeling of community.

Sharing Site Content

Seven of 23 participants aged 18-34 said they share stories/news videos/photo galleries/links from edmontonjournal.com by using Twitter, while six of the 23 respondents said they did so by using Facebook. Four of those respondents use both social media sites to share what they find on the news website. Seven of the 10 respondents aged 35-44 use Twitter to share and only three use Facebook. Of the 18 people aged 45-54 and 55-64, 10 of them will share items from edmontonjournal.com through e-mail; only one person said she shares through Twitter, while four said they use Facebook. The results of this study reveal that those participants who are in the higher age ranges tend not to use social media sites as much as those who are younger. Even sites such as LinkedIn, a social network for working professionals, are rarely used by this pool of respondents to share items from edmontonjournal.com even though 44 out of the 51 total respondents are currently employed in some capacity. While it is possible that most of these edmontonjournal.com visitors do not have Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn or other social media accounts that can be used to share with those they know, it seems that even if they do, they still prefer to use more traditional methods of sharing, in this case, e-mail, with 23 of the 51 participants stating that to be one of their top methods. On the topic of sharing information found on edmontonjournal.com, it should also be noted that one-third of the total respondents stated that they do not share any items they find on this newspaper website. Ten of the 17 participants who provided that answer are between the ages of 18-34, only one is between 35-44 and the other six are between 45-54 and 55-64 years old, which is additional evidence that middle-aged participants and those older tend to be the ones who like to share items found on newspaper websites with others as opposed to those who are younger. Future research that uses a much larger sample size of participants would perhaps reveal if this pattern holds true.

Time Spent Per Visit and Frequency of Site Visitation

When analyzing time spent per visit to the edmontonjournal.com site, I found that those aged 18-34 and those between the ages of 45-54 and 55-64 are about evenly split. Eight of the 18 between the ages of 45-54 and 55-64 said they spend 10-30 minutes on the site every time while 10 of the 18 respondents in those same age ranges said they spend less than 10 minutes. Similarly 10 of the 23 participants between the ages of 18-34 spend less than 10 minutes during each visit to edmontonjournal.com and the other 13 in that age category spend 10-30 minutes. The anomaly to this is the group of 10 people between the ages of 35-44. Only one person in that age range said he spends 10-30 minutes on the site per visit while one other person said he visits for 31 minutes to an hour at a time. The other eight respondents aged 35-44 stated they usually spend less than 10 minutes on the site at a time. Those eight people tend to visit edmontonjournal.com at least twice a week, so they are fairly frequent readers, but they do so in short bursts. Of interest in future research would be to investigate how age and lifestyle influences length of time spent catching up on news online. Based on these results, it would seem that perhaps those in the 35-44 age range still want to feel part of the community by keeping up to date on stories and articles found on this website as discussed earlier, but have busy lives that do not allow them to do so for longer periods of time. Therefore, they do so in shorter time frames, yet more often.

While the amount of time survey participants tend to spend on each visit is not lengthy, many of them still visit multiple times a week. Although the tendency is for them to access edmontonjournal.com on weekdays during the daytime, likely while at the office, it seems that age may play a role in likelihood of visiting this news website on weekends and evenings. Of the 23 people between the ages of 18-34, just one person stated that she more frequently visits edmontonjournal.com on weekends and one other respondent said she more frequently accesses

the site during the evenings. Looking at those 35-44, of the 10 total participants within that age range, none viewed the news website on weekends, but this time two of the 10 respondents said they usually go onto edmontonjournal.com in the evening versus during the day. Since this group is smaller than those who fit in the 18-34 age range, there is a possibility that if the groups were, in fact, the same size, that perhaps we would see that there might be slightly more responses of weekend and evening frequency of visitation with those 35-44. The reason this is suspected is because when going over the data collected, it is seen that out of the 18 participants within the 45-54 and 55-64 age ranges, the number of frequent weekend readers jumps to four and the number of evening readers moves up to five people. Judging by these results, it seems that the higher the age range, the more likely they are to peruse edmontonjournal.com in their own spare time on weekends and evenings rather than during weekdays and in the daytime, which is considered by most to be the typical work week. While this small sample size makes it hard to make generalizations of this nature, a pattern may be there and only further study that focuses on this aspect will be able to shed more light on whether or not age is a factor regarding the time of day and day of week that newspaper website visitors tend to access that information. It would be worth investigating to see if age and lifestyle factors, for example, adults with children, adults with no children at home, students, people with weekly extracurricular activities, influence when people go onto the site. Frequency of site visitation and length of time spent viewing online newspaper websites is especially prevalent in today's increasingly digital world where the platforms that are available allow people to access news websites virtually anywhere they are.

Device or Platform Typically Used to Access Site

The results gathered regarding the device or platform used by respondents to access the edmontonjournal.com site reveal that the traditional website as viewed on a desktop computer is

still the most typical way to read the online paper. Twenty-two of the 51 total participants in the survey chose the desktop computer as the device they most frequently use when they visit edmontonjournal.com. Another nine said they use a laptop computer, which is not surprising since many people use laptops in lieu of desktop computers. Nine people stated that they usually view edmontonjournal.com using a smart phone. Of note is that seven of those nine are between the ages of 18-34. The remaining 11 of 51 respondents said they most often go online to read edmontonjournal.com using a tablet device such as an iPad, Blackberry Playbook or a Samsung Galaxy Tab powered by Android. Of these 11 tablet users, seven of them are between the ages of 45-54 and 55-64. The smart phone and the tablet platforms are the only two devices where there seemed to be a distinct age group that preferred to use each. Smart phones are very ubiquitous in society, especially among those who are younger and feel the need to have the latest technologies, so it actually makes a lot of sense that if they were to follow edmontonjournal.com online that they would do so on their mobile smart phone devices. Tablets, while they are also somewhat seen as status symbols and are by no means unused by those who are younger, tend to be more expensive, so perhaps fewer of those in the younger age groups are willing to purchase them while their older counterparts are. Age may play a further role in that older readers, who want a more mobile platform to use, opt for the tablet because it is a device that can accommodate larger fonts and requires less scrolling than smaller smart phones that are about the size of one's hand, which translates to easier reading of the web pages. Some devices are also more conducive to running the interactive features that are available on news websites. Unreliable Wi-Fi on a mobile device such as a smart phone or tablet may make loading of web pages and videos more time consuming, which could be a reason why a majority (31/51) of the participants in this exploratory research study still prefer to use a desktop or a laptop computer as they can be directly wired to internet.

Other Areas of Interest

Commenting

Of the ten out of 51 people who answered "yes" on question 12 (has there ever been a story that you wanted to comment on, but were unable to do so because the comment function was not available for that story?), eight of them had stated on question 10 that they never comment on stories. Eight of them also never watch the videos provided online and seven at least periodically read comments posted by others when they visit edmontonjournal.com. This seems to support the idea that although this group says they have wanted to comment on occasion, but were unable to, they are still less likely to take up an active role. Even if the comment function was available, they have already stated that they never comment anyway and are more passive participants in that they prefer to simply read contributions from others instead of providing their own input or taking the time to add to their knowledge of a story by viewing the featured videos. Referring to what was discussed in the literature review, it would seem that these eight participants fall within Anders Olaf Larsson's (2011) newspaper website user profile of The Lurker whereby they are content to simply appreciate the contributions of others, but do not contribute themselves.

Employment Status

With regards to current work situations of participants, almost all are currently employed with only seven who are students and six who are either unemployed or retired. There were not enough participants in any one category, other than employed respondents, to determine any patterns. A future survey that gathers a larger sample of participants in a greater variety of age groups and current employment statuses could garner even richer data with regards to how older

readers, retired readers, students, etc. use the website and whether or not older readers actually make as much use of the interactive features as younger ones do. This particular survey was distributed through links on social media sites, so the respondents tended to be younger and employed. No one over the age of 64 participated. While some who are older still partake in social media, they may not use those sites as often and may have missed their chance to participate in the survey, or maybe there just are not that many who use them at all. The next time a study of this nature is done, whether it is with this same website or a similar news website, it may be a consideration to expand from online distribution to paper format distribution to have a better chance of obtaining a greater range of respondents.

Open-Ended Responses

Those who responded to question 18 about other local news websites that they visited were asked to relate in an open-ended response what they like about those sites and what they might want edmontonjournal.com to incorporate onto their website. Thirty-nine of the 51 total participants said they visited at least one other local news website regularly. However, only 15 of the 39 opted to provide further explanation on question 19. Their suggestions for improvement to edmontonjournal.com can be grouped into three different themes: unique stories, greater range of opinions, and frequency of site updates. Suggestions were based on what they had seen on the other local news websites, which included The Edmonton Sun, Metro Edmonton, Global Edmonton, CTV Edmonton, CBC Edmonton, Huffington Post Edmonton as well as other reader specified sites such as Alberta Venture and Alberta Diary.

Participant #7 stated that CBC Edmonton is committed to doing unique stories that cannot be found elsewhere, a response similar to that of Participant #25 who says that CBC Edmonton has more diverse stories. Participant #49 stated that sites such as that of the Globe & Mail have

more interesting stories, which seems to be a reiteration of the same sentiments. This same person noted that the Globe & Mail provides a broader perspective on stories seeming to indicate that edmontonjournal.com perhaps has a narrow slant to their stories at times. This is mentioned also by Participant #44 who says that CTV Edmonton is able to provide a different opinion, likely meaning in addition to what they have read on edmontonjournal.com. More diverse opinions provided within the same publication would be welcomed. Participant #14 continues this same thought by stating that the news sites of CBC Edmonton, Huffington Post Edmonton and Alberta Diary have a "wider variety of viewpoints." And Participant #25 bluntly criticizes when he says edmontonjournal.com needs to have "less backslapping stories about Edmonton."

The other main theme that arose with a few of the responses was that the other news sites were updated more frequently. Participant #18, who is a CBC Edmonton site visitor said that she goes to the site because she "think[s] [CBC] will likely have breaking news first" while Participant #25 said that CBC Edmonton updates their stories more often. Participant #45 said that both the CBC Edmonton and Global Edmonton news websites offer live Twitter feeds on breaking news, so information is constantly updated in short spurts and she does not have to wait for the actual news page to be rewritten, which saves her time. The *Edmonton Journal* does have a Twitter page, but the *Journal* news writers tend to post links to the actual story when it is finished as opposed to giving constant updates on specific stories. Articles that are in the midst of being written are usually placed on the site with just minimal information and the line "more to come..." at the end (see Appendix F for an example).

Judging by the categories that emerged frequently, the speed with which news is updated, the quality of the articles and the variety of viewpoints provided are where edmontonjournal.com readers would like to see changes applied, rather than with the build of the website or the interactive features made available. When it comes to news that matters to readers, they do not

want to read the same information every time they access the site. Readers want to be enlightened by hearing all sides of the issue and they want to be made aware of important news immediately rather than later.

As seen from the feedback received in question 19, those who chose to voice their opinions about what makes those other online news sites better are simply seeking out the best of the information that is out there and they want edmontonjournal.com to improve.

As previously mentioned, 16 of the 51 participants opted to leave an open-ended response on question 21 when they were asked if there were any additional comments about any aspects of edmontonjournal.com that they wanted to touch on. All but three of those respondents kept their responses short, providing only one or two sentences. One of the three longer open-ended replies from Participant #6, a male between the ages of 35-44, was highly negative:

The sole reason I check out the Journal website is that I'm interested in what's going on locally, & would never shell out for a printed copy of a rag that won't even do as emergency bumwad. Its "local" contents are scant even on the website, now that the whole thing is edited out of Hamilton, having fired almost all local writers, & kept only the odd "local colour" story along the lines of "Johnson's cow stuck in the bog again!" As with all Postmedia publications, the Journal's reactionary slant prevents it from actually serving as a useful source of national & international news: but it's great for keeping tabs on the latest right-wing agit-prop.

Surprisingly, despite this reader's beliefs about edmontonjournal.com, he still visits the website at least five to six times per week, as per his answer to question 3. Although there are other sites that cover local Edmonton news, such as CTV, CBC, The Edmonton Sun and Global amongst

others, this reader has opted not to look at any of them. Participant #9 gave a similar response to this question saying he believed Postmedia, the current owner of the *Edmonton Journal* newspaper and edmontonjournal.com, will go under and that the paper has lost focus by moving away from local coverage of news.

Two of the responses were quite positive, but the answers were short. One participant simply said, "I enjoy the paper, always have," while another said "it is the best publication in Edmonton." Three of the 16 open-ended responses were classified as neutral. They did not skew positively or negatively towards edmontonjournal.com, but were essentially stating facts. For example, Participant #7 stated, "I read a lot of edmontonjournal.com stories on my smartphone, via Twitter. When I go to the website, it's usually on the desktop, but that's at work, and it's rarer than accessing stories on my phone."

Interestingly, Participant #7 was not the only one to mention accessing edmontonjournal.com via updates on Twitter. In fact, Participant #18 also said that Twitter helped to draw her in by providing alerts on breaking news throughout the day. Looking at this person's response to question 20, the device she typically uses when accessing edmontonjournal.com is her smart phone, making this open-ended answer very similar to that of Participant #7.

The remaining seven responses of the 16 open-ended answers on question 21 dealt with various topics including: the site interface, advertisements, online subscriptions, weekend versus weekday updates and the Facebook comment function. The return to a generic commenting feed was discussed earlier; the need to have a Facebook account to comment on articles that are posted on edmontonjournal.com either forces the reader to sign up for something they may not want to use or it excludes people by limiting who can respond when people refuse to register for social media networks.

Only one person mentioned this, but it is worth noting that Participant #5 thinks that edmontonjournal.com news stories seem to be lacking on weekends compared to weekdays, which could possibly be the case, although there is no official evidence of this. However, it would be worth investigating because the printed paper is only distributed by the *Edmonton Journal* Monday to Saturday with no paper available on Sundays, so even though writers do update news on the site seven days a week, because the *Journal* does not need people on staff to prepare the print paper on Sundays, perhaps fewer staff members in the office covering news stories translates into fewer updates or uploads to the site over the weekend.

With regards to the site interface, three people mentioned that it could be improved. Participant #27 wanted easier search functionality while Participant #29 reiterated that opinion by saying that the navigation on the site is lacking and does not encourage people to explore the site further. Participant #49 said that she typically is a print reader rather than an edmontonjournal.com reader, but she will view the site on her tablet if her paper is not delivered or does not come on time; however, whenever Participant #49 visits the site, she finds that it does not always work that well on her iPad. Obviously, this shows that ease of use accessing the website through one's chosen device or platform is important to getting people to stay on the site once they are there and it seems that edmontonjournal.com has some shortcomings in that respect. The advertisements on the site seem to annoy readers with Participant #13 saying that he dislikes having to watch the advertisements that come up before a video will start playing, which delays viewing of the actual news story. Participant #45 had a problem with pop-up ads crashing her browser, making the page load slower and delaying the actual reading of the article. It can be surmised that if this browser crashing happens frequently, visitors will be deterred from returning to the site.

Lastly with question 21, several respondents mentioned that they liked that edmontonjournal.com did not charge people to read the website. The other main local newspaper site, edmontonsun.com, erected an electronic paywall earlier in the year, meaning after a certain number of articles, readers are prompted to subscribe for access to the rest of the site. Shortly after this survey was completed, however, edmontonjournal.com did put a paywall in place. Many people always expect websites to be free because the internet is so open, but news websites run by legitimate hard copy publications should be compensated for their contributions online as much work is done to produce the website as well. It was fortuitous that this survey took place before the paywall went up because the timing ensured that these participants did, in fact, have access to the site anytime they liked. It would be interesting to do another survey now that the paywall is in place to see whether the restriction affects readers' feelings about edmontonjournal.com and whether or not they will subscribe for access or go elsewhere.

Those who opted to expound further on their feelings towards edmontonjournal.com provided much rich information about what they wanted to see. The themes (see Image 1) are clearly stated and likely fixable if the *Edmonton Journal*, and their owner, Postmedia, are willing to put the time and effort into improving the site. According to the respondent comments, the website needs to be easier to use and needs to have a more local focus with more diversity in stories and more frequent updates. Perhaps if the site can hone in on those aspects, readers would be willing to pay the new online subscription for continued access to news.



Image 1 - tag cloud of the common words mentioned in the open-ended responses of Q21

DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: In what ways do *Edmonton Journal* readers interact with the content of the newspaper's website?

As was revealed in the results for question 1 in the findings section above, of all the more interactive features available on edmontonjournal.com, including commenting, reading comments, reading blogs, watching videos, viewing photo galleries, sharing content, submitting letters to the editor, entering contests and looking at job postings, only two features made the list of the top five things readers typically do when they visit the website. Those two choices were viewing photo galleries and reading comments on stories. Judging by this response, most of the users in this survey fall into Larsson's (2011) Bystander profile, meaning they tend to appreciate what is there, but they refrain from using it. Because viewing photo galleries and reading comments (but not contributing to either section) was common practice, many of the *Edmonton*

Journal site users in this survey can be categorized as Lurkers since they appreciate what others have to contribute, but are passive and do not submit material themselves. In fact, 46 of the 51 respondents meet these criteria in that they read comments, but never comment themselves. This means they choose not to participate in higher level human website interactivity - refusing to be a Prosumer or even a Critic by avoiding dialogue all together - and remaining as users of lower level medium and human interactivity as described by Chung (2008; 2009) and Yoo (2011). However, looking at this in a different light, it can be argued that at least reading comments is a start to participating - a dipping of the toes into human interactivity at a higher level - because they are taking part, but leaving their activity at one-way broadcast rather than the two-way dialogue that is the hope and purpose of the commenting feature.

The question of whether or not the commenting function is being put to best use on the website when commenting is not always available is also important. Some readers stating that they never comment, but would have liked to on past stories where the commenting feature was unavailable leads one to believe that perhaps commenting would be more common if visitors had the option to talk about any and every piece of content rather than just certain stories. This news website also needs to be aware of democratizing their features in order to increase participation. Using features that require membership on social media sites may be discouraging use by the masses. On the plus side, interesting, useful and new information prompts readers to share the content they see and read on the news website, with half of the respondents acting as Filters who spread news to others they know. Half of the participants also stated that they watch the videos on the site as a means to enhance their knowledge of the stories, adding to the richness of their lower level medium interactivity. If, for example, readers are mostly attracted to food articles, perhaps in addition to providing recipes, the website could also include cooking videos to

accompany the articles or have videos of local restaurant chefs sharing a favorite recipe with readers/viewers on a regular basis.

Overall, this researcher found Larsson's profiles to be limiting in that he only focuses on how much someone contributes while they use a website. Larsson's profiles do give a good general idea of what the audience is like, but they do not consider use of features such as watching a video or looking at a photo gallery as being participatory. Instead, Larsson centers his attention on actual participation through conversation, opinion and influence, and less on reading, watching, or looking. The categories dictated by Chung and Yoo were also limited in that they focused solely on the features, not on the people using them. However, combining the profiles and the categories outlined by all three researchers - Larsson, Chung and Yoo - allows for the creation of a more comprehensive, multi-dimensional picture of the audience in this particular study as opposed to the one dimensional descriptions that would have emerged with just one researcher's results for comparison.

Research Question 2: Do *Edmonton Journal* website visitors use and appreciate the interactive features? How often are they utilizing them?

Regarding the question of whether or not edmontonjournal.com readers regularly utilize and appreciate interactive features, participants contributed many suggestions for site improvement. They said that the site needs more frequent updates and that breaking news should be live fed through social media to better fit with the audiences' requirement of fast news. In addition, the *Journal* should enhance the website interface in order to help it run more smoothly. Readers have issues with the loading speed of pages on the site, which may be deterring visitors from staying on the site longer to use the features provided because they know it takes too much time. From a more positive angle, 38 of the 51 total respondents visit the site at least twice per

week: they come because edmontonjournal.com is one of the few news websites that focuses on more local news, and, at the time of the study, it was still a free online publication. While readers are spending no more than 30 minutes on the site per visit, they are regularly accessing the website during the daytime on weekdays, but they tend not to do so on their own time, but rather during work hours. As readers move towards more mobile platforms, such as the tablet and the smart phone that can be used to view news sites whenever and wherever they choose, and as online newspapers work to improve site layouts and provide features that run more effectively on those types of interfaces, there may be a greater uptake of readers during evening hours and on weekends for edmontonjournal.com. As well, readers may spend a longer period of time on the site per visit instead of staying for only short bursts of time. At the time this survey was distributed, readers seemed satisfied enough with what is available when they do use the site to keep them coming back throughout the week.

Research Question 3: What type of dialogue and interaction do *Edmonton Journal* readers actually want to see on the newspaper website?

The overarching answer to Research Question 3 is that readers do not consider interactivity to be a necessity. Only a few participants fell into the Prosumer profile by making extensive use of high level interactivity, leading to the conclusion that the audience that participated in this survey are content to act as passive consumers of information. The edmontonjournal.com audience already see themselves as contributors to the news website whenever they read and look at the content. Regardless of how much they make use of the available features, readers still believe that as citizens of Edmonton, Alberta, they should be visiting in order to fill their sense of civic responsibility and obligations to their community.

The vast majority of readers in this survey do not require the dialogue and the interaction with the newspaper or other readers. However, I also think that it is too soon to state this matter-of-factly. Because news websites run by traditional print publications are still relatively new and still finding their place in the overall news landscape, and developing to meet readers' needs, many of their readers may also just be starting to become accustomed to the idea of two-way dialogue. It may be a matter of time before readers push for a more dominant presence on newspaper websites.

Conclusion

The questions in this survey delved into the topic of interactivity and asked what people do when they visit edmontonjournal.com, including sharing, commenting and watching news videos. As mentioned previously, content (i.e. galleries, videos and topics) geared towards specific demographics and platforms can help to engage visitors better by targeting them through their preferred topics of interest.

Studying the interactive features of the *Edmonton Journal* website, what kind of control the audience has over their experience, and seeing whether or not the newsroom and the audience has accepted the reality of increased consumer participation, perhaps will lead to the active audience concept becoming more of the norm with this particular newspaper as well as other print publications. A refusal on the part of newspapers to move further into the direction of collaboration through interaction could very well mean their demise. At the very least, online newspaper websites must, as organizations, use communication to "serve three basic functions: production, maintenance, and innovation or adaptation" (Dobos, 1992, p. 33). In order to maintain their status as viable news sources that are trusted within their communities, online news publications have to continue to produce the stories that people come to them for, they need

to maintain the quality of those stories and the credibility that they have built, and they have to do so in creative ways that get people talking or thinking about it past the point of the web page. That is the process by which sites like edmontonjournal.com should live by if they want to remain relevant.

These research results give a strong message that news sites cannot be everything to everyone all the time; they need to know when to pinpoint specific groups of people about specific topics through the use of specific interactive technologies. This ability to study and analyze newspaper audiences and what they choose to do when they visit the website and why they do so is essentially the basis of the U&G theory to communication. This goes back to the originators of U&G theory, Jay Blumler and Elihu Katz, who understood that media could be manipulated by the people who were exposed to it (Siraj, 2007, p. 399). As seen in this study, online newspaper audiences are inundated with various interactive features on a daily basis. Newspapers should consider their website to be a fertile testing ground whereby the readers' lack of use may signify to the newspaper disinterest in that particular offering. While that may be a slight manipulation on the part of the online news creators, the site can also be viewed as a platform that allows members of the audience to send a message to the newspaper that what has been provided is or is not satisfying their wants or interests, as per John Galloway's (1981) expectancy model. The more push and pull there is between the newspaper and its readers, the better chance the newspaper has of increasing audience gratifications gained from visiting the website and increasing frequency of visitation. Perhaps if the editors and creators of the *Edmonton Journal* website take into account the results of this research project, more of their audience members will begin to participate more fully in the interactive website features.

Limitations and Areas for Future Research

The newspaper audience information that this research has just begun to uncover is large in scope, but the major limitation of this study is that it is small scale and exploratory. While the inferences made may, in fact, have some bearing, this is not a representative sample of the edmontonjournal.com readership. Therefore, until a more thorough investigation is done that takes into account a greater number of *Edmonton Journal* web visitors, the aforementioned results should be understood to be interpretations of this researcher. Any application of the recommendations provided throughout is at the discretion of the person or company who chooses to do so.

A further limitation was that this research presented a very brief snapshot in time. Usually a cross-sectional study such as this one is sufficient to provide a glimpse of the chosen subject. However, in this particular case, this research was conducted just prior to the erection of a site paywall. Although the timing of the study could be considered a strength because it ensured that all participants had equal access to the edmontonjournal.com site whenever they wanted, it can also be seen as a weakness because the data gathered is not expansive. The information covered here only tells us what was happening with the audience at that point in time and not what is happening with readers now that the paywall is in place.

The last major limitation was that this project was unable to further explore readers' opinions of needs and wants in greater depth. To do so would have enriched the data. Yet, the research was not designed to delve as deep as we ultimately would have liked. Because a brief questionnaire was deployed for this study, the respondents were limited to more simplified answers with only a few chances to expand upon their choices.

As with most research, this study has brought more questions to the surface than it has answered, including questions of the place a newspaper holds in society. Areas for future

research could investigate whether or not newspapers, in general, are still a necessity. What kind of role do newspapers or online news publications play when it comes to civic responsibility and community growth?

With regards to how readers access newspaper website content, it would be worth exploring typical audience or demographics garnered per platform to better cater to the site's actual audience. We need to ask if people are making use of these platforms and the flexibility they allow or if they are they still living by the belief that a newspaper, whether in material form or digital form, requires a set space and time to really absorb the content. Is that regardless of the person's age or because of their age that they may feel this way?

The *Edmonton Journal* has strived to create a greater sense of community through increased site interaction and reader participation, but we have to ask if it is actually working. Other newspapers are likely wondering the same thing. Therefore, we need to explore whether or not all this work is worth the effort if the majority of readers are not putting these interactive features to use.

Future research that focuses on these topics, as well as studies that attempt to garner greater participation in order to more clearly determine whether demographics actually make a difference, is required.

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Appendix A



UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Digital First: A Case Study of Newspaper Website Interactivity on Edmontonjournal.com

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Background

You are being invited to participate in this exploratory study of the Edmonton Journal website because we would like to learn more about how visitors like you interact with the digital newspaper. You have been contacted because you are a part of my online social network or have been sent a link by media or tech savvy mutual acquaintances. You may also be a follower of the Edmonton Journal Facebook page and have connected to this survey through a link I posted there. The results of this study will be used in support of my research project in the Master of Arts in Communications and Technology (MACT) program at the University of Alberta's Faculty of Extension.

Purpose

Within the field of print media, it has become apparent in today's world of ever-changing technologies that capturing and holding onto an audience is extremely difficult. In response to the growing number of bloggers and amateur journalists inhabiting the internet landscape in recent years, news publications have begun to move from a reliance on the print edition, focused on a medium of broadcast, to that of a dialogue with their audience by taking a "digital first" approach, emphasizing more and more the use of their online websites.

As such, the focus of the study will be the website of the Edmonton Journal (edmontonjournal.com) in terms of the content and interactivity available, including questions about how you, as the audience, use the site. The knowledge gained from this study will help to ensure that traditional news organizations remain as viable sources of information, providing credible journalism to you and, in scholarly capacities, to students and researchers. The data gathered during this study may lead to improvements to the functionality of edmontonjournal.com and its interactive features.

Study Procedures

You will require an internet connection to complete the online questionnaire at a location of your choosing (i.e. home, office, etc.). The survey should take no more than 15 minutes to answer. Once completed, the data that you have provided will be stored on fluidsurveys.com where only myself and my project supervisor will have access using a protected password. To participate, you must be 18 years of age or older, and have visited the Edmonton Journal website before.

Benefits

While you will not receive any material benefits for your participation in this study, your responses may lead to possible improvements to the functionality of the edmontonjournal.com website, as well as improvements or changes to the interactive features based on the feedback that you provide.

We hope that the information we gather from doing this study will help us better understand your reasons for visiting or not visiting edmontonjournal.com, how interactive features affect your attitudes towards the site, and what that means for the newspaper in this digital age.

There is absolutely no cost for your participation. We simply hope that you will spare 15 minutes of your time to help us with this important research.

Risk

This is a no risk to low-risk study. One or more demographic questions (i.e. age) may be considered to be of a sensitive nature. However, the survey has been reviewed and edited to minimize the possibility of psychological risk or harm.

Voluntary Participation

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. Participation is completely voluntary.

If you start the survey and decide you want to withdraw while you are filling it out, simply close your browser window.

Completion of the survey acts as your consent to use the data you have provided. Once your completed survey has been submitted, your data will remain as part of the study. Your data can no longer be withdrawn because there will not be any identifying information attached to your submission. Therefore, we will not be able to differentiate your responses from the others received.

Confidentiality & Anonymity

The results of the study will be discussed in my culminating research project for the MACT program, and may also be printed as an article in research journals. While the Edmonton Journal is not sponsoring or funding this research, they may receive a copy of the final report for their information.

The raw data collected will be kept confidential. Only myself and my project supervisor, Dr. Ann Curry, will have access to the data during and after completion of the study.

Your anonymity will be guaranteed as no identifying information (i.e. your name, address or e-mail) will be collected during the survey.

Following the completion of the study, the data collected will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in Dr. Ann Curry's office on the University of Alberta Enterprise Square Campus for a period of 5 years. Any electronic data that is held will also be password protected. After the minimum of 5 years required to keep the data, all electronic files will be deleted from any computers or flash drives, and any paper documents will be shredded securely by an electronic shredder located at the university.

Further Information

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact me, Crystal Lee, at cclee@ualberta.ca or (780) 233-9996, or supervisor, Dr. Ann Curry, at ann.curry@ualberta.ca or (780) 248-1110.

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.


To continue with the survey, please click "NEXT" below.

Appendix B


Page #2

Simple Skipping Information

- If Q2 = No then Terminate survey


 1) What is your current age?(Q1)

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75+


 2) Do you read/look at edmontonjournal.com (the non-subscription Edmonton Journal website accessed through your web browser)?(Q2)

- Yes
- No


Page #3

 3) In an average week, how often do you visit edmontonjournal.com?(Q3)


- Everyday
- 5-6 times a week
- 2-4 times a week
- Once a week
- Less than once a week

 4) On average, how much time in total do you spend on each visit to the edmontonjournal.com website?(Q4)

- Less than 10 minutes
- 10-30 minutes
- 31 minutes to 1 hour
- More than 1 hour

 5) Do you more frequently visit edmontonjournal.com on:(Q5)

- Weekdays (Monday to Friday)
- Weekends (Saturday and Sunday)

 6) Do you more frequently visit edmontonjournal.com during:(Q6)

- The daytime (5 a.m. to 5:59 p.m.)
- The evening (6 p.m. or later)

Page #4

7) What do you typically do when you visit edmontonjournal.com?(Q7)

Check all that apply.

- Glance at the latest headlines
- Read the latest stories
- Visit specific sections on the site (i.e. Sports, Life, etc.)
- Comment on stories
- Read comments on stories
- Read blogs
- Watch videos
- View photo galleries
- Share stories/videos/photo galleries with others
- Submit letters to the editor
- Enter contests
- Look at job postings
- View the classifieds
- Other, please specify... _____

Page #5

8) If you share stories/news videos/photo galleries/links from edmontonjournal.com, how do you do it?(Q8)

Check all that apply.

- E-mail
- Twitter
- Facebook
- Google+
- Pinterest
- LinkedIn
- StumbleUpon
- Other social media site
- Other way of sharing, please specify... _____
- I do not share (please skip to question 10)

9) When do you most often want to share stories/news videos/photo galleries/links on edmontonjournal.com? When they...(Q9)

Choose only one response.

- Are interesting
- Are useful (i.e. recipe, job posting, advice, etc.)
- Are entertaining
- Contain new information
- Are well written
- Other, please specify... _____


Page #6

 10) How often do you post comments on the Journal site regarding stories you read on edmontonjournal.com?(Q10)

- I never comment
- Less than once a week
- 1-3 times a week
- 4-6 times a week
- Once a day or more

 11) How often do you read the comments posted by others on edmontonjournal.com?(Q11)

- I never read the comments
- Less than once a week
- 1-3 times a week
- 4-6 times a week
- Once a day or more

 12) Has there ever been a story that you wanted to comment on, but were unable to do so because the comment function was not available for that story?(Q12)

- Yes
- No

Page #7

 13) What is the main reason you view news videos on edmontonjournal.com?(Q13)


- They give additional insight
- They show you visually what the story is talking about
- They provide witness testimony/accounts
- They provide a quick synopsis of the written story
- I never watch the videos

Page #8

14) What are the types of articles that attract your attention and get you to read the full story on edmontonjournal.com?(Q14)

Check all that apply.

- 1 - International news
- 2 - National news
- 3 - Provincial news
- 4 - Local news
- 5 - Opinion pieces
- 6 - Business
- 7 - Sports
- 8 - Health
- 9 - Entertainment
- 10 - Life/Style
- 11 - Food
- 12 - Travel
- 13 - Working (Jobs)
- 14 - Automotive
- 15 - Homes/Real Estate

 15) Of the types of articles that you chose, which are your top two?(Q15)

In each box, insert the number that corresponds with your top two answers above.

1 _____

2 _____

Page #9

16) What are the reasons you visit edmontonjournal.com?(Q16)

Check all that apply.

- 1 - This newspaper keeps me up-to-date on issues that interest me
- 2 - This newspaper has interesting columns and editorials
- 3 - Reading this newspaper makes me feel more a part of my community
- 4 - It's my civic responsibility to keep informed on issues and happenings around me
- 5 - Reading the newspaper online means learning about news in a variety of ways (i.e. through galleries or videos)
- 6 - When I find stories I like, it's easy to share these online stories with others
- 7 - Breaking stories are constantly updated when I read them online
- 8 - It's a habit/been doing it for a long time
- 9 - None of these

17) Of the reasons you chose for visiting edmontonjournal.com, which are your top two?(Q17)

In each box, insert the number that corresponds with your top two answers above.

1

2

Page #10

18) What other local news website(s) do you regularly visit?(Q18)

Check all that apply.

- The Edmonton Sun
- Metro Edmonton
- Global Edmonton
- CTV Edmonton
- CBC Edmonton
- Huffington Post Edmonton
- Other, please specify... _____
- I do not read any other local news website (please skip to question 20)

19) Thinking about the other local news website(s) that you visit, what features does it/do they have that you might like to see incorporated on edmontonjournal.com?(Q19)

Page #11


20) What type of device do you typically use to access edmontonjournal.com?(Q20)

- Desktop computer
- Laptop computer
- Mobile phone (basic cell phone with internet access)
- Smart phone
- Tablet (i.e. iPad, Samsung Galaxy Tab, Blackberry Playbook, etc.)


Page #12

 21) Do you have any additional comments about any aspects of edmontonjournal.com?(Q21)

Page #13

 22) What is your gender?(Q22)

- Male
 Female
 Other

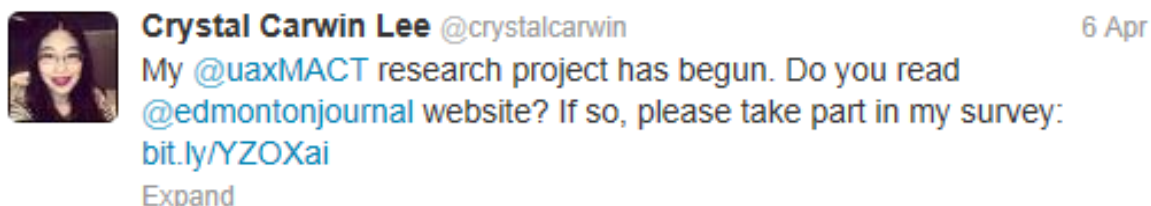
 23) Are you currently...(Q23)

Check all that apply.

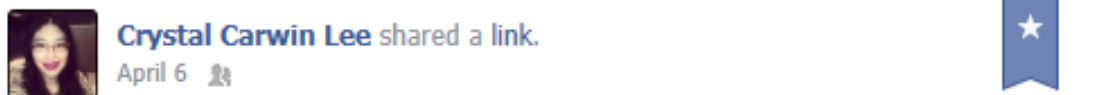
- A student
 Employed
 Unemployed
 Unable to work
 A homemaker
 Retired

Appendix C

Twitter post:



Facebook post:



As most of you know, I am currently completing my Masters in Communications and Technology through the University of Alberta. As such, I must conduct and submit a final research project.

Being that I have worked at the Edmonton Journal for almost six years and am interested in the move from paper to digital, I decided to gear my project towards learning about interactivity on the Edmonton Journal website.

If you read edmontonjournal.com and are interested in participating in my brief survey, please click here:

<http://fluidsurveys.com/surveys/crystalcleeuofamact/edmonton-journal-website-interactivity-apr-1/>

You may also share the link above with anyone you know either by sharing this post or e-mailing the link.

All responses will be anonymous, so thank you in advance!



Like · Comment · Share



Appendix D

Q19

Thinking about the other local news website(s) that you visit, what features does it/do they have that you might like to see incorporated on edmontonjournal.com?

Responses:

#7 - CBC has a commitment to doing stories no one else is doing. I would like the Journal to do more of that.

#9 - Real local news. I get everything else from other sources (specified Alberta Venture as other site)

#12 - Real blogs (Regarding CBC and Huffington Post)

#14 - Wider variety of viewpoints, easier and faster access to websites (Regarding CBC, Huffington Post and Alberta Diary)

#18 - I go to them because I think they will likely have breaking news first (Regarding CBC)

#25 - Stories updated more often, more diverse stories, less back slapping stories about Edmonton (Regarding CBC)

#26 - (Re: number 9 in previous question - NOTE: #9 in Q18 would have been "I do not read any other local news website. However, this respondent still answered Q18 by checking off Edmonton Sun. Though this further information in the open-ended field of Q19 does answer why they still checked that off). The only reason I stopped reading the Edmonton Sun online is because they started charging for online subscription. I'd like to see better spell check used in the Journal and more accurate articles...

#29 - Easier to navigate between articles and to find new content that interests me (Regarding Global, CBC and reddit.com/r/edmonton)

#30 - Edmonton Sun is an easier and more pleasing to the eye website

#34 - n/a, I like the Edmonton journal app because it gives me breaking news notification. (They said they read CBC, but I guess there isn't anything about that site that they want applied to the Journal.)

#40 - TV listings (Regarding Global and 24 Hours - latter is not really a website, it's an e-edition of the printed version, so it's static and doesn't change throughout the day)

#44 - A different opinion (Regarding CTV)

#45 - Live Twitter Feeds so the breaking news is updated as you go, you don't have to wait for the page to be rewritten. (Regarding Global and CBC)

#47 - More video clips (Regarding CBC - maybe people watch videos if they're more known for it - CBC is a TV broadcast as well as a website, so it already comes with the territory)

#49 - More interesting stories in areas of interest with broader perspective (e.g. travel, business) (Regarding Globe & Mail)

Appendix E

Q21

Do you have any additional comments about any aspects of edmontonjournal.com?

Responses:

#5 - There seems to be fewer stories on weekends than on weekdays

#6 - The sole reason I check out the Journal website is that I'm interested in what's going on locally, & would never shell out for a printed copy of a rag that won't even do as emergency bumwad. Its "local" contents are scant even on the website, now that the whole thing is edited out of Hamilton, having fired almost all local writers, & kept only the odd "local colour" story along the lines of "Johnson's cow stuck in the bog again!" As with all Postmedia publications, the Journal's reactionary slant prevents it from actually serving as a useful source of national & international news: but it's great for keeping tabs on the latest right-wing agit-prop.

#7 - I read a lot of edmontonjournal.com stories on my smartphone, via Twitter. When I go to the website, it's usually on the desktop, but that's at work, and it's rarer than accessing stories on my phone.

#9 - I predict Post Media will go under within next few years. They lost focus by trying to compete with others instead of focusing on their USB, which is local coverage.

#13 - I dislike ads inserted at the front of videos. In the hard-copy paper, I can ignore ads. Online, I must endure them. Irritating.

#15 - No, I enjoy the paper, always have.

#18 - I read the newspaper in the morning- it is where I read my lifestyle features. I get alerts during the day for breaking news which draw me to the Journal webpage, twitter also draws me in. (User uses smart phone most often)

#21 - If I find an article that I'm interested in, then I'll click on it and end up in the Edmonton Journal site, not that I go to the site first, then browse at articles.

#24 - I would prefer if they would move back to their old comment format. I believe comments are accessed by Facebook at this time, and that is something I do not use. (currently mentioned on page 18 of findings/discussion)

#26 - Do not charge for online subscription, I can go somewhere else for my news if you do - why i stopped reading the sun. The journal needs to start having more accurate and better in depth articles - too many times have i read an inaccurate article with wrong information in it; however small. It is their responsibility to report the news correctly.

#27 - Make the search functionality easier.

#29 - The website needs to be redone. It doesn't have a lot of the navigation and enticer features that encourage readers to continue to explore. I find it difficult to navigate and will often go to Google to find breaking news if I become frustrated with the Journal's system.

#30 - I like that it's still free, unlike the Sun.

#44 - It is the best publication in Edmonton

#45 - I don't like the way the pop up ads are done. It often crashes my browser or makes it slower to load/read the articles. I wish they would find another way to show the ads so they don't pop up on the page the way they do, then you have to close them out before (I use Chrome) you are able to actually scroll down and read the article.

#49 - It doesn't always work well with the iPad. I read it mainly when my paper isn't delivered on time. Still prefer print.

Appendix F

Two teenage brothers die in Highway 16 crash near Elk Island National Park

EDMONTON JOURNAL JULY 15, 2013 9:17 PM

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STORY

PHOTOS (3)

VIDEO (1)



Officers restrain a man who drove up on the accident scene and may have been related the deceased. Strathcona RCMP investigate a collision at Highway 16 and Range Road 213 east of Sherwood Park. Both occupants in the green Saturn sedan were deceased on scene, while the driver of a pick-up truck was injured.

Photograph by: Shaughn Butts , Edmonton Journal

STORY TOOLS

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EDMONTON - Two teenage brothers died early Monday afternoon in a two-vehicle collision at Highway 16 and Range Road 213 in eastern Strathcona County.

They have been identified as Dalin Torresan, 17, and Logan Torresan, 14, both of rural Strathcona County. The were in a Saturn sedan driven by Dalin.

The driver of the GMC pickup, a 54-year-old male from Willingdon, in hospital with non-life threatening injuries.

RCMP said preliminary investigation indicates the Saturn failed to proceed safely after stopping at the stop sign, then entered Highway 16. It was raining at the time.

More to come ...

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