



SOCIAL MEDIA, LED BY FACEBOOK, ARE DOMINANT NEWS SOURCE FOR YOUNGER MILLENNIALS

In Reversal from Two Years Ago, Traditional Media Sites Run Close Second

BOSTON, Jan. 5, 2015 – Social media channels have become the dominant source of news among college students in Boston, but the news sites of established media brands are a close second, according to a poll by Howell Communications. The survey also found that despite an explosion of new social media channels, Facebook remains by far the most popular source for news.

“It’s clear that in a crowded and noisy media environment, younger millennials are looking to established sources and brands for reliable information,” said Raymond P. Howell, the president of Howell Communications. “This survey data is important to Howell Communications and our clients as we think about the next generation of consumers.”

The poll of 333 college students in Boston was conducted by Boston University College of Communication students under the direction of professor Anne Danehy, a 25-year veteran of public opinion research for corporations, non-profits, government agencies and political leaders.

The survey found that 75 percent of students “always” or “often” use social media to access news, while 63 percent use news websites. That’s a reversal from a similar Howell Communications poll conducted two years ago. In the latest poll, apps and blogs were far behind both social media and news websites, at 42 percent and 20 percent, respectively. Consistent with their preference for established sources, respondents most often (47 percent) cited credibility as having the most influence on their choices.

Among social media, Facebook was the overwhelming favorite at 61 percent, followed by Instagram at 33 percent, Twitter at 21 percent, Snapchat at 16 percent and YouTube at 12 percent. Among Facebook and Twitter users, 39 percent accessed news through a news feed, while just 7 percent did so on the basis of what is trending. The poll also sought to detect up-and-coming news sources by allowing participants to write in any social media channels not covered by the survey – and Tumblr and TheSkimm topped the list.



The survey also found that:

- Smart phones and computers are nearly tied as the most popular devices for accessing news, with 88 percent of respondents saying they use a smartphone “always” or “often” and 87 percent saying the same about a computer. Television, print and radio were far behind, at 18 percent, 15 percent and 6 percent respectively.
- World events, national news and politics led the list of “most important” topics, at 38 percent, 18 percent and 14 percent respectively.
- The typical student wants news packaged into a short article with short paragraphs and pictures.
- The average time spent examining news is one to three hours per week.

About Howell Communications

Howell Communications is a full-service public relations firm founded in 1995 by one of New England’s most respected communications strategists, Raymond P. Howell, a former reporter and gubernatorial press secretary. The company offers strategy development, content development, media relations, crisis communications, social media, spokesperson training, relationship development, market research and issues management. Howell Communications’ clients include many of the world’s and region’s best-known brands.

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