



**“OLD MEDIA” BRANDS ARE THE OVERWHELMING NEWS CHOICE  
OF COLLEGE STUDENTS IN BOSTON**

*New Survey Also Shows Laptops Are Used  
More than Smartphones and Tablets*

BOSTON, Tuesday, Jan. 8, 2012 – Contradicting the conventional wisdom that young people are abandoning “old media” news sources in favor of social media and blogs, the overwhelming majority of college students in Boston go to the websites of established media brands for news, according to a new poll by Howell Communications.

The survey also found that laptops remain the dominant device for getting news among college students, beating both tablets and smartphones. The scientific poll of 302 college students ages 18 to 24 in Boston was conducted with the help of Boston University research students under the direction of professor Anne Danehy, a more than 20-year veteran of public opinion research.

[Previous research](#) has detected similar trends, but there is one key difference: Other polls have focused on the entire adult population, while the Howell Communications survey focused narrowly on the latest generation of news consumers.

“This survey information is invaluable to our company and our clients as we develop public relations strategies in an increasingly diverse and seemingly chaotic media environment,” said Raymond P. Howell, president of Howell Communications. “What this says to corporations and other organizations, political leaders and other public figures is that established media brands are still the gold standard for reaching even the latest generation of news consumers.

“Organizations and public figures should take advantage of social and digital media to target and amplify relevant news, but content is still king and established media brands are still the king of content – and will be for the foreseeable future,” Howell added.

“The beauty of public opinion research is that the public always has a surprise or two for you,” said Danehy. “The surprise here is that college students’ news consuming habits are not that different from those of the population as a whole. We believe this is a significant finding of our research, with implications for anyone trying to reach this key population.”

In the survey, nearly 78 percent of respondents said they visit traditional media websites “often” for news, with almost 43 percent saying they visit such sites “very often”. That was nearly 20 percent more than the 60 percent who said they go to social media sites “often” for news. Only one in four respondents chose blogs or “apps” as a place they go “often” for news.

60 State Street, Suite 700 | Boston, MA 02109 ● P.O. Box 461 | York Harbor, ME 03911

Tel 617.878.2018 | Fax 617.332.2652 | [www.howellcomm.com](http://www.howellcomm.com)



In addition, when pushed to choose between “established and well known websites” and “new and innovative websites”, more than 60 percent chose the former and only 9 percent the latter.

But the students differentiated between the print and online versions of the same media outlets, with 54 percent saying they found the online sites “more reliable”. Researchers speculated that it was because online sites are constantly updated and therefore more current.

The poll also found that:

- 86 percent of college students in Boston “often” use a computer (and virtually all a laptop) to get news, compared to 61 percent who use a smartphone and 12 percent who use a tablet.
- 91 percent of respondents said they prefer to search for news themselves rather than receive it through an email subscription.
- College students in Boston spend an average of 36 minutes a day consuming news.

### **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 press secretary to former Massachusetts Governor William F. Weld. The company offers strategy development, media relations, digital and social media services, crisis management and media training to New England’s business community. Howell Communications’ clients have included such brands as Arco, AT&T, BearingPoint, Boston Medical Center, Cablevision, Comcast, GlaxoSmithKline, IBM, Microsoft, National Grid, NESN, Partners Healthcare, Sherwin-Williams, the University of Massachusetts, Viacom and Waste Management.

###

Contact: Pam Jonah  
[Pam\\_Jonah@howellcomm.com](mailto:Pam_Jonah@howellcomm.com)  
781.956.6865