

Trolling and News

- Trolling: Anonymously insulting someone online to annoy or intimidate them
- Gyges Effect: A phenomenon whereby internet users experience a loss of inhibition that they would otherwise not experience face to face
- With little personal interaction, in computer world with no filters or contrition, users lose empathy
- On the early Web, news sites' comment sections became ideal venue for pointless vicious attacks
- This normalized trolling and set stage for even more widespread occurrence in social media
- Insulting can escalate into harassment, stalking and/or violence – criminal activity
- Can have serious real-world effects

Trolling and News

- Journalists have long been popular trolling targets
- Trolling largely began on news and blog sites
- Journalism is meant to draw readers/viewers, and often involves publishing unpopular or controversial facts
- Culture of media bashing in recent decades has emboldened many to blame media for their problems
- Women, minorities, LGBTQ writers often targeted
- Has led to some violence against journalists
- Comments originally meant to be positive feature of online news – now frequently disabled
- Downside of completely unfettered free speech

‘Need to Know’ vs. ‘Want to Know’

News audiences need to know:

- Anything paid for with taxpayer money
 - Government/elections (city, county, state, federal)
 - Schools (elementary, secondary, colleges/universities)
 - Law enforcement & corrections
 - Public institutions (utilities, parks/rec, etc.)
 - Health care/hospitals
 - Transportation (roads/highways, buses/trains, etc.)
- Organizations/institutions that affect public
- Weather/environmental/quality of life issues
- Consumer-related issues
- Anything with direct effects on their lives

‘Need to Know’ vs. ‘Want to Know’

News audiences want to read (statistically popular):

- Anything with direct effects on their lives
(neighborhood, regional)
- How tax money is being used
- Stories containing people with whom they identify
- Things they can share with family/friends
- Profiles of interesting people
- Entertainment/celebrity news
- Sports news
- Shocking/unusual stories
- “The real story” – let in on a (so-called) secret
- News that validates how they feel (confirmation bias)

Elements of Newsworthiness

- **Timeliness:** News is what's new; it just happened and people need/want to know
- **Proximity:** Things that happen nearby or will have effects in your area are newsworthy
- **Prominence:** Audiences are interested in things that happen to celebrities, politicians or other well-known people
- **Impact:** Something that had, has, or will have long-reaching or significant effect is newsworthy
- **Conflict:** Can be physical or emotional; open or unseen conflict; people vs. people; people vs. nature
- **Oddity:** People are always interested in the unusual – the person, place, time, event, or context involved is out of the ordinary
- **Human Interest:** Audiences identify with others' achievements, struggles and quirks – usually entertaining or amusing
- **Shock Value:** Stories involving death, scandal, and other lurid or bizarre elements

Types of News Story Audiences

- General (everyone)
- Geographical (neighborhood, region)
- Cultural (ethnic, religious, lifestyle)
- Gender-Based (traditional or non-traditional roles)
- General Subject-Based (sports, A&E, outdoors)
- Specific Subject-Based (baseball, hip-hop, kayaking)
- Age-Based (generational)
- Event-Based (deep coverage of major event)
- Niche (extremely specific)

‘Need to Know’ vs. ‘Want to Know’

We answer the questions we ask

| | WHO DECIDES WHAT THAT IS? | HOW TO KNOW THE STORY “WORKED”? | WHAT KINDS OF STORIES RESULT? | WHEN DOES AUDIENCE FEEDBACK COME INTO PLAY? |
|--|------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| WHAT DOES OUR AUDIENCE WANT? | Newsrooms | Analytics | Clickbait | After publication |
| WHAT DOES OUR AUDIENCE NEED? | Newsrooms | Awards | “Important Stories” | After publication |
| WHAT DOES OUR AUDIENCE NOT KNOW THAT WE COULD HELP THEM FIND OUT AND UNDERSTAND? | Audiences | Answer Their Questions | Infinite Variety | Pre-Publication |



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*this chart contains overgeneralization for the sake of argument

[“Give the audience what they want or what they need? There’s an even better question,”](#) by Jennifer Brandel,
Medium.com, May 25, 2016