

We're In Love with the Internet

Written by Cheryl Pearson-McNeil
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We Americans love our Internet. According to a new Nielsen study, “Top U.S. Web Brands and News Websites,” nearly 212 million of us were surfing the net in some shape, form or fashion in May this year – a little more than 276 million of us are estimated to have Internet access. Like Oleta Adam’s lyrics, “I don’t care how you get here, just get here when you can,” Americans take various avenues – mobile Internet, computer or tablet – to visit the Web sites we love.

We spend, on average, a whopping 29 hours online per person a month. For a 30-day month, this works out to be a little less than an hour a day. And you know how quickly time flies when you’re “surfing” the Web. (Wouldn’t it be great if the same could be said about working out and we committed ourselves to exercising that much each month? I almost passed out this morning doing walking lunges and realized I had only been at it for 45 seconds. But, I digress).

We loved Google the most, as it remained the champion of Web brands visited in the United States, with 173 million unique visitors (“unique” is digital-speak for the number of visitors counted once to a Web site). Facebook came in second with close to 152 million unique visitors. Rounding out the top five brands were Yahoo! (almost 143 million), YouTube (127.5 million) and MSN/WindowsLive/Bing (almost 127 million).

Here’s a complete U.S. picture for May 2012:

- The average person made 64 Web site visits/sessions.
- 97 domains were visited per person.
- There were 2,716 Web page views per person.
- Each Web page was viewed an average of 1 minute and 5 seconds

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- Online time per person was 29 hours, 7 minutes and 48 seconds for the month.
- 211,985,000 people went online.
- 276,550,209 people had Internet access.

Now I don't know about you, but I don't intentionally set out to view 2,716 Web pages. Does anyone? You just get caught up with it, right? You start out trying to find a recipe or news recap or gossip tidbit and the next thing you know another item on that page catches your attention, so you click on it. Then another little sumthin', sumthin' on the new page grabs you, and off you go again. And so on and so on, until BAM, you've viewed 2,716 Web pages in a month.

We love being in the know: 57 percent of online Americans visited current events and global news sites, averaging 18 visits and a total of 1 hour 22 minutes. Interestingly, the popularity ranking of a Web site does not always correspond with the amount of time spent there.

Take a look:

1. More than 62 million unique U.S. visitors visited Yahoo! – ABC News. Average time spent per person was 17 minutes, 56 seconds.
2. CNN Digital Network followed with 39.6 million, but people spent on average more time here, about 35 minutes per person, and this site had the most page views (1.6 billion).
3. HPMG News (formerly AOL News brands), had more than 33 million visitors. Average visit: 16 minutes, 17 seconds.
4. MSNBC Digital network: 30.1 million visitors, 15 minutes, 3 seconds.
5. NYTimes.com: 29.2 million visitors, 19 minutes, 16 seconds.
6. Huffingtonpost.com: 29 million visitors, 20 minutes, 46 seconds.
7. Tribune Newspapers: 22.5 million visitors, 7 minutes, 58 seconds.
8. Fox News Digital Network: 21.6 million visitors, 34 minutes, 36 seconds.
9. Today: Almost 16 million visitors, 8 minutes, 52 seconds.
10. USAToday.com. 15.1 million visitors, 8 minutes, 50 seconds.

Page views are comparable to ratings for TV. The higher the number of views, the higher the site's advertising rates. Higher rates mean more revenue. Get where you fit into this equation yet? Riiiiight! Your consumer power is at work even as your nimble fingers surf the Web, because our collective visits add up. Where do you spend your time? I hope you're using your 29 hours, 7 minutes and 48 seconds wisely with sites and advertisers that are deserving of your precious (and limited) time. Otherwise, I'm going to invite you to take up doing those walking lunges with me, so you can fully appreciate the value of even a mere 45 seconds!

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