



Report: The First Engagement Benchmarks for Case Studies, White Papers, and Other Downloadable Documents

by Steve Peck

Contently

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Contently Document Analytics

Marketers can track almost everything that lives on the web. However, some of the most valuable digital marketing collateral doesn't live on web pages. Resource-intensive assets like e-books, white papers, sales sheets, case studies, PDFs, and slideshows are crucial for generating leads and nurturing prospects, but marketers have had no real way to track how they perform.

At Contently, that's a problem we've solved through our new technology: Contently Document Analytics. In this report, you'll discover how people have engaged with marketing documents across:

6,250 hours of engagement by

106,687 B2B decision-makers accounting for

18,256 view sessions from

1,776 resources.

Let's dive in.

Engagement Benchmarks by Industry

Industry	Average View Time	Average Document Length	Median Document Length	Median View Time (seconds)	Median Per Page View Time	Average % Complete	Median % Complete	Average Form Conversion
All Industries	2.03	13.4	7	51	12	57%	50%	27%
Professional Services	2.27	10.3	7.5	25	13	53%	44%	24%
Software and Internet	2.1	13.5	11	46	12	52%	33%	26%
Publishing	1.96	11.6	8	77	12	63%	75%	31%
Marketing Agencies	1.95	13.2	12	50	11	50%	41%	32%
Healthcare	1.8	6.5	5	43	17	68%	83%	28%
Financial Services	1.35	7	7	48	18	42%	28%	22%

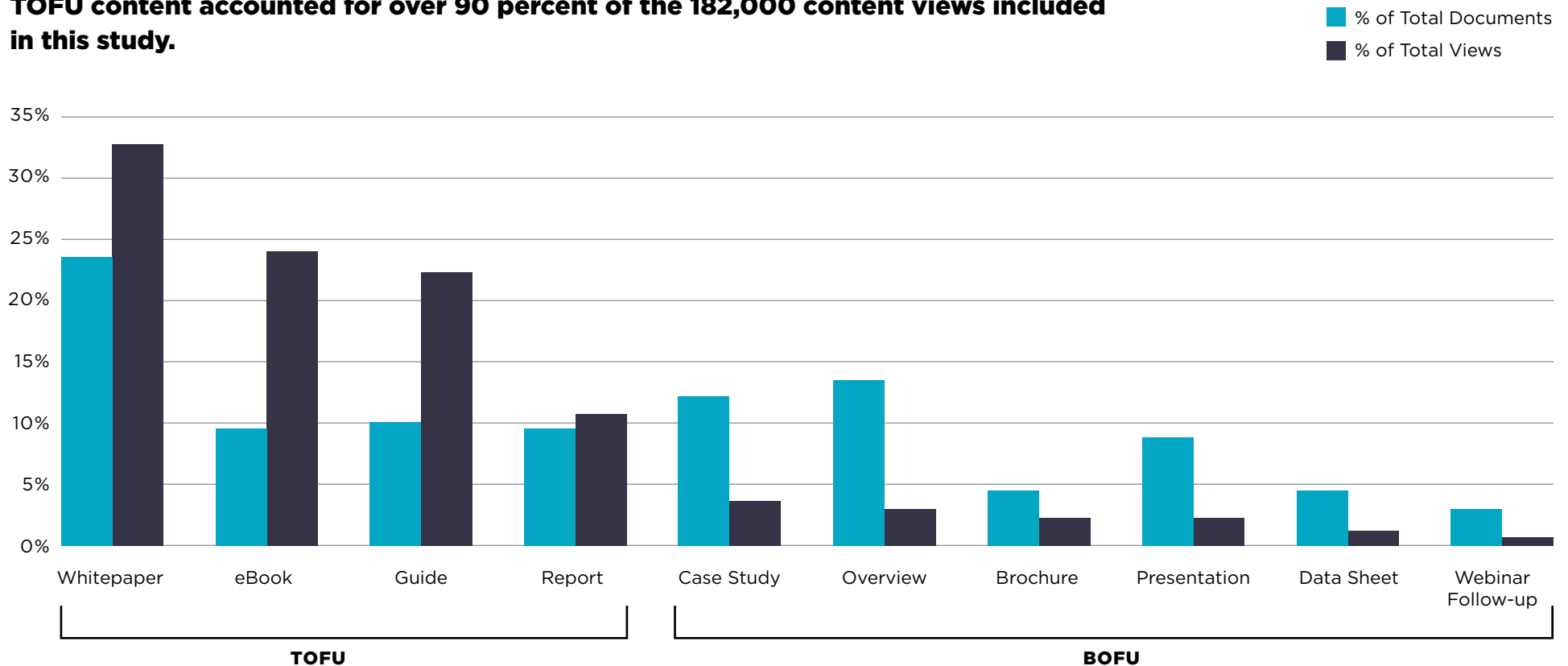
Quick Takeaway

There is a notable difference in average content length across industries, ranging from 6.5 to 13.5 pages. But longer assets do not necessarily equate to more time spent. In fact, readers spend more time per page on shorter resources.

TOFU Content: Half the Documents, 9x the Views

Top-of-funnel (TOFU) content like whitepapers, guides, e-books, and reports represent 53 percent of all resources included in this study. The remaining 47 percent consists of bottom-of-funnel (BOFU) content. These BOFU resources include more product-focused content such as case studies, product overviews, presentations, and data sheets.

TOFU content accounted for over 90 percent of the 182,000 content views included in this study.



The Experts Weigh In: What Type of Content Should I Create?

Lee Odden, CEO, TopRank Marketing

“Detecting patterns in how readers consume content should help guide your content marketing strategy. For example, if the vast majority of your audience consumes content on a mobile device, then your content should be skimmable and, of course, optimized for mobile.”

Matt Heinz, President, Heinz Marketing

“Content is king, but only if the empire is listening. If you don’t speak to your constituents, you may lose that kingdom fast. For example, C-level targets aren’t going to read twenty-page white papers. They will skim through SlideShare decks, watch short videos, and scan bulleted written content. Using podcasts won’t work for older audiences, but millennials who listen to something on their commute to and from work are great targets for that format. If you don’t align with audience preferences, you’re missing out on a huge opportunity to increase engagement, response, and conversion.”

Ardath Albee, CEO & B2B Marketing Strategist Marketing Interactions

“Make sure the topic, tone, and style are relevant to your audience and their context within the buying process. Become a ruthless editor. Longform content can be successful. The problem is that a lot of longform content isn’t compelling all the way through. That’s why people stop reading.”

Alex Schirtzinger, Director of Content Marketing, Salesforce

“Campaign goals should drive all other considerations when it comes to creating content. Your objectives should include target segment, persona, and industry—and the type of content produced should reflect those priorities.”

Make Your Point in Two Minutes or Less

Though the average length of the documents we analyzed was 13.4 pages, readers only spent an average of two minutes and three seconds engaging with them. B2B marketers have a very limited amount of time to make an impression with their content, so it's best to make your point quickly.

AVERAGE VIEW TIME

2:04

AVERAGE PAGE LENGTH

13.4

MEDIAN VIEW TIME

51 seconds

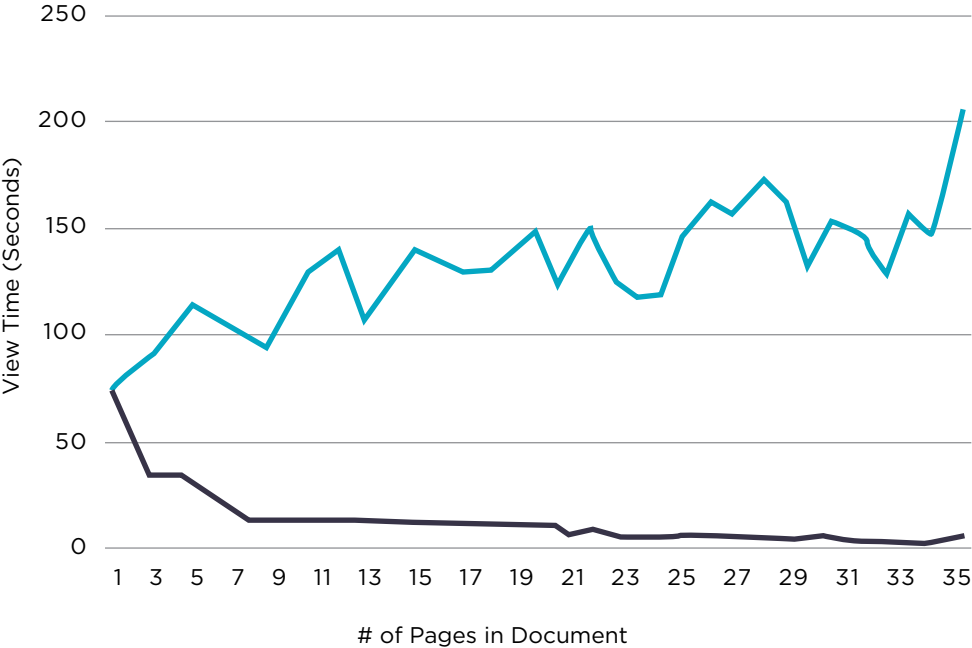
MEDIAN PAGE LENGTH

7

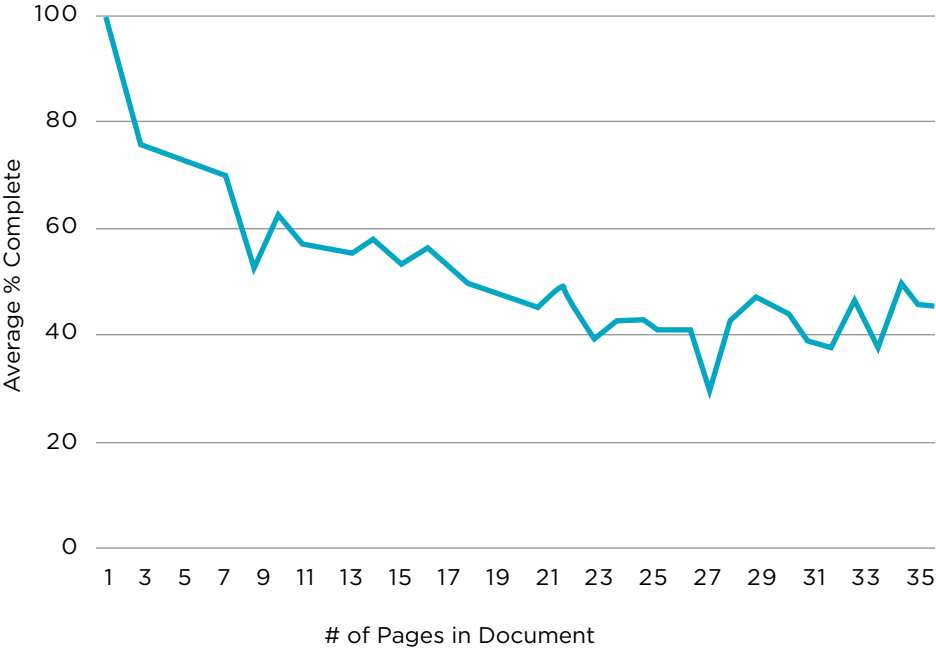
More Pages = More Time Spent, But Less Engagement

As the first graph demonstrates, there was a positive correlation between length and overall time spent with a content asset. However, it's not all good news for longer assets. As the number of pages increases, both the average time spent on each page and the percentage of a document consumed decreases.

Avg. View Time vs. Per Page Time against Number of Pages



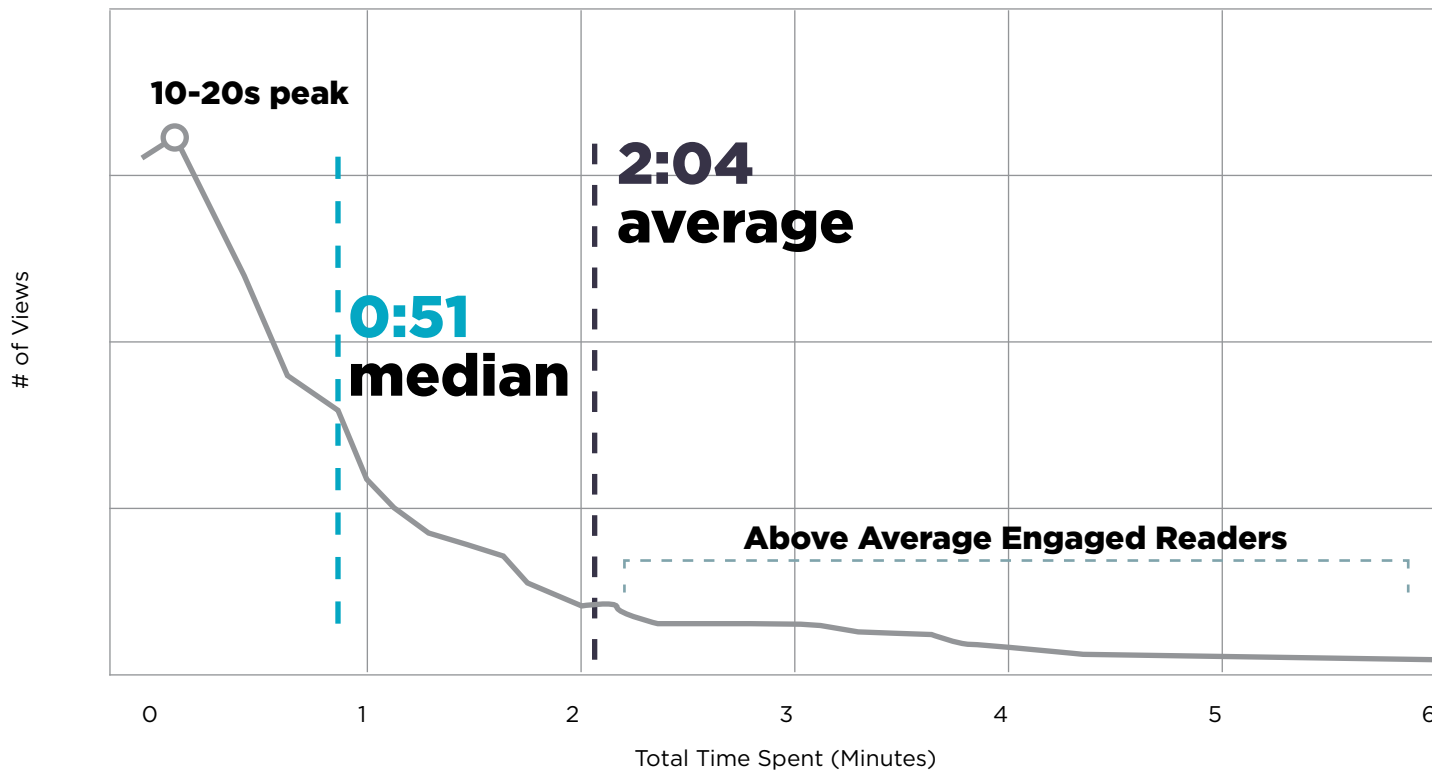
Avg. % Complete by Content Length



— Average Total View Time
— Average Per Page View Time

Most Readers Spend Less Than a Minute With Your Content

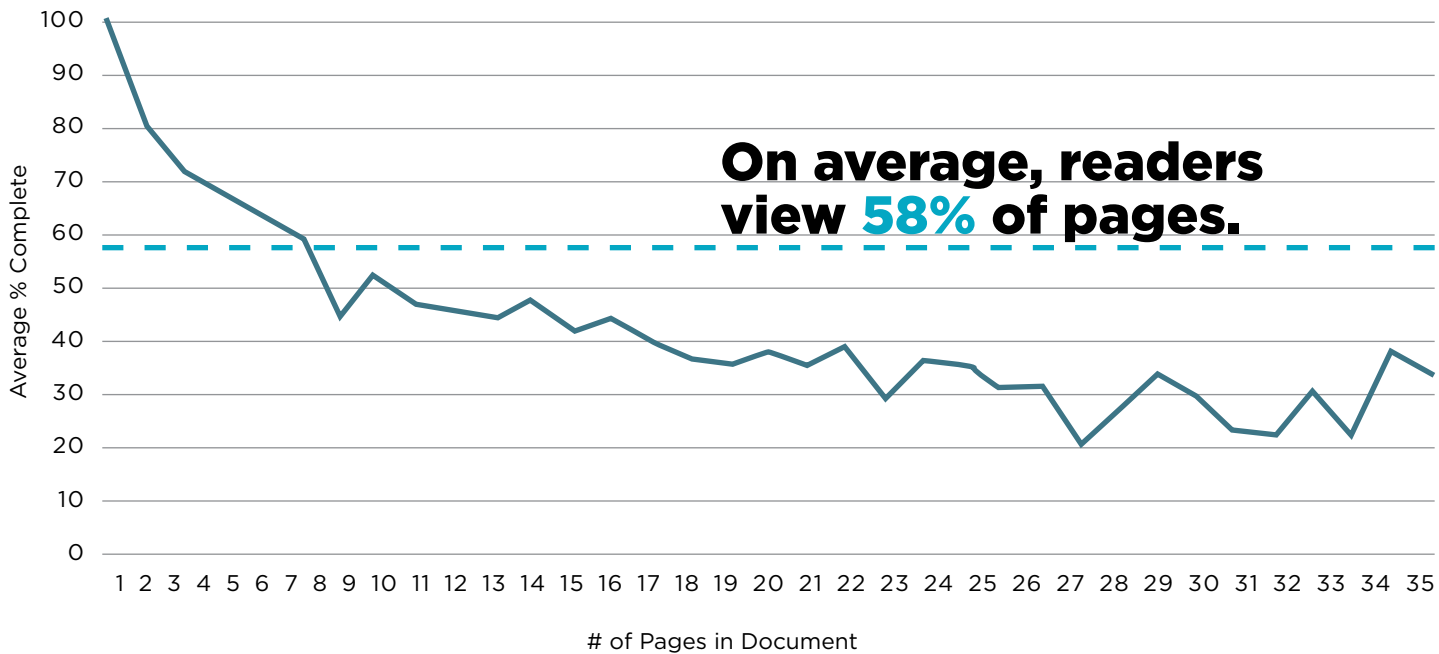
Total Time Spent Related to # of Views



Thirty-five percent of readers will spend less than 30 seconds engaging with your content, and the median time spent was just 51 seconds. These numbers underscore the importance of identifying genuinely engaged readers in the long-tail and nurturing them accordingly. These folks will likely be interested in what you have to say.

(Almost) Everyone Skims

Even though average time spent is low, prospects still cover a lot of ground when looking at a downloadable asset, suggesting that most readers just skim.



Most Readers Won't Come Back

Don't be disillusioned—79 percent of readers won't return to check out your content a second time.

% OF TIME READERS RETURN FOR A
SECOND VIEW

21%

Most Readers Will Only Read One Content Asset

Most readers won't view a content asset twice, and 85 percent of them will never look at another asset of yours again.

READERS WHO ONLY CONSUME ONE
CONTENT OFFER

85%

Smart marketers with quality content and tailored nurturing campaigns can flip this stat. The key is ensuring that your downloadable content actually delivers on the promises that your landing page makes. Deception is one of the fastest ways to lose a reader.

Documents Trump Blog Posts, but Not Video

Content Type	Average Length	Median Length	Average View Time	Median View Time	Average % Complete	Average Comparison
Video	9 min 40 sec	3 min 4 sec	3 min 34 sec	1 min 48 sec	59%	11%
Document	13.4 pages	7 pages	2 min 3 sec	51 seconds	56%	27%
Blog Post	2,416 words	1,600 words	15 seconds	15 seconds	20-28%	7%

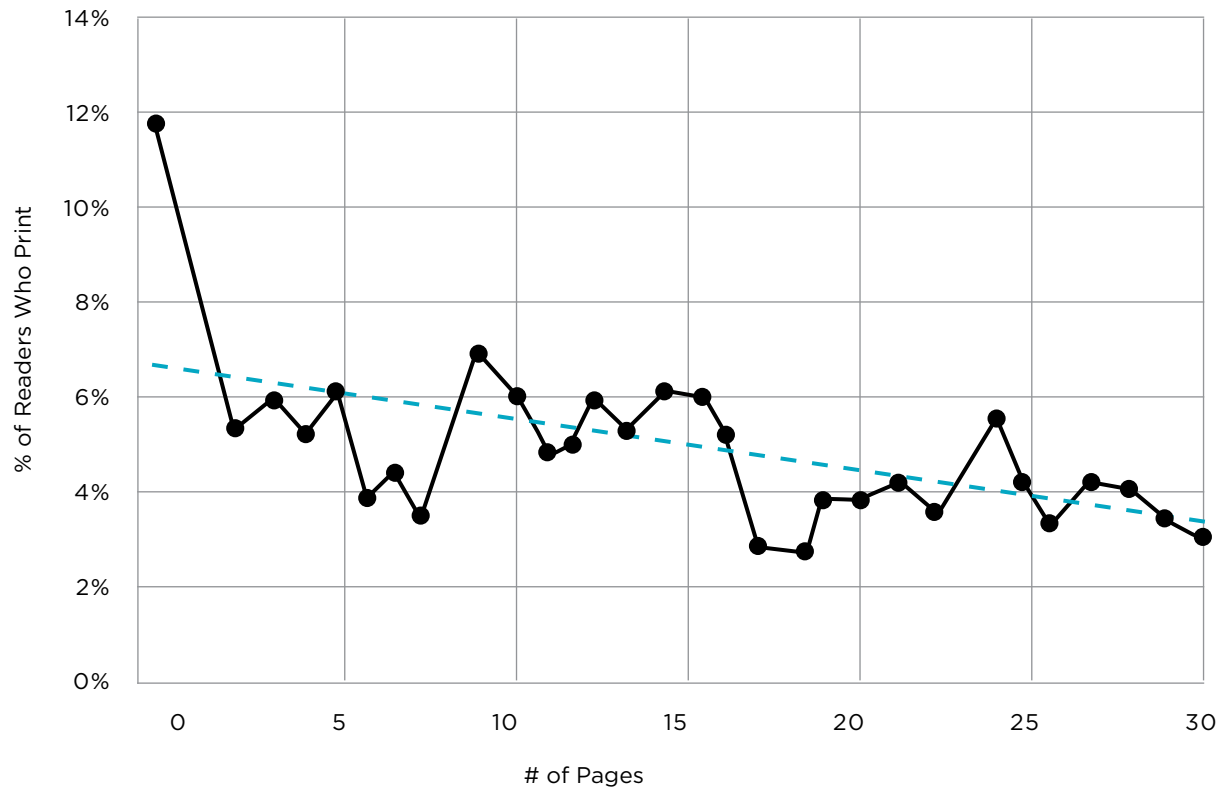
In addition to downloadable assets, many of today's B2B marketers leverage video as an important part of their content strategy. This got us thinking about benchmarks for branded video content, so we asked the experts at [Wistia](#) to weigh in.

They provided engagement information pulled from their large database of marketing-driven video content. You can see that data, along with third-party data on blog-post engagement, in the table above.

According to these benchmarks, video may be the most effective medium for engaging readers, with the highest average length, median length, average view time, and median view time by a significant margin.

Nearly 95 Percent of Readers Won't Print

Probability of Print



Only about five percent of readers in our study elected to print a document. The data also shows a negative correlation between document length and a reader's likelihood to print.

Most Documents Are Read on Desktop

DESKTOP VS. MOBILE VIEW TIME TIME

90% occurred on desktop

Ninety percent of total view time of longform content took place on a desktop, while only 10 percent occurred on a mobile device. By comparison, 65 percent of media is now consumed on mobile, [according to comScore](#). Average desktop view time (2:12) was 30 percent longer than average mobile view time (1:27).

Most Mobile Readers Come From Social

Sponsored Content Channel	% Mobile	% Desktop
Facebook	80%	20%
LinkedIn	48%	52%
Twitter	42%	58%
B2B Digital Publishers	18%	82%

Distribution channels heavily impact whether a reader views downloadable content from a desktop or a mobile device. Desktop users are much more likely to access content directly through a company’s website, while mobile users are much more likely to access content sideways through social channels.

If you’re promoting your content heavily through paid social ads, make sure your design and lead forms are optimized for mobile visitors.

Thank you.

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