

THE AUTHORITY REPORT

The State of Tags in Digital Media

Are Digital Publishers Using Metadata Well?

TAG ANALYSIS
REPORT PERIOD
MAY-JULY 2015

tag *noun*

1. Metadata accompanying an article or post on a media or content site.
2. The most common use of tags is to identify topics or subjects in an article that go beyond the high-level "section" designation.
3. Sometimes tags are also used to help readers or internal users find other articles that cover the same subset of topics.

Working with nearly 400 digital media organizations has given the Parse.ly team an insight into how different companies use, or don't use, tags. In this Authority Report, we examined tags across our network.

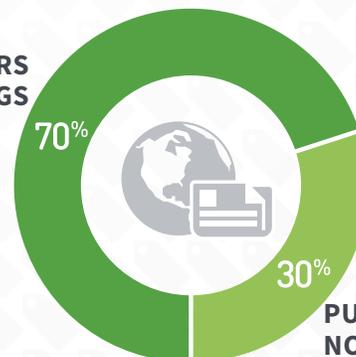
Why the curiosity? Tagging posts is not necessary, nor is there a limit to the number of tags that publishers may use per post. In fact, tagging has no standardized process from organization to organization. There's been a significant amount of discussion about the possibility of expanding the usefulness of tags beyond topic identification to a classification system of anything; we've seen companies use tags to identify sponsored content, sentiment, tone, and length.

TAG USE ACROSS PARSE.LY'S NETWORK

According to our findings, tags have no bearing on audience size. Publishers who are not using tags garner a higher number of average daily page views (one million) than publishers who are using tags (612,000 average daily page views).

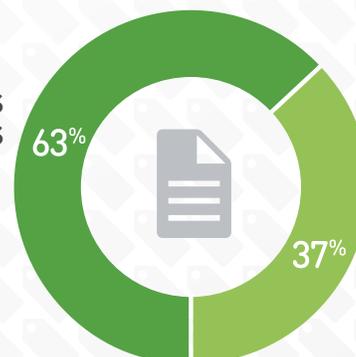
How does your tagging structure stack up to that of your peers?

PUBLISHERS USING TAGS



PUBLISHERS NOT USING TAGS

POSTS WITH TAGS



POSTS WITHOUT TAGS

HOW DO PUBLISHERS USE TAGS TO CLASSIFY CONTENT?

While most digital publishers use “keyword tags” to categorize posts by topic, some are now turning to “knowledge tags” to classify content beyond the topic of an article.

Our publishers have found value in tagging content by:

Content Type: Do readers respond better to quizzes than videos on your site? Do “listicles” garner better engagement than traditional posts? Tagging based on content type can allow for analysis on these questions.

Editorial vs. Native/Sponsored Content: Publishers can track and consolidate performance metrics about their sponsored content into one place; and, if relevant, they can share this data with advertisers.

Paywall Access: Which content is available for free, and which is being accessed by paid subscribers?

General Descriptors: Content can be tagged based on sentiment, tone, length, and any other classifications that a publisher may use to understand how their audience responds. For example, are long-form articles keeping readers’ attention the way they’re meant to? Do readers share snarky stories?

5.2

AVERAGE NUMBER OF TAGS PER POST
AMONG ALL POSTS USING TAGS

Does tag count increase with the length of the post? Very, very slightly—if at all. Essentially, if we increase the word count of an article from one word to 10,000-words, the average number of tags in the article only increases by around 0.36.

450

AVERAGE NUMBER OF TAGS PUBLISHERS USE IN A MONTH

Using more tags doesn’t necessarily generate more page views. When we correlated the size of a publisher’s audience with the number of tags it used, we found that the number of tags used is unrelated to the size of an audience.

THE FUTURE OF TAGS: HOW CAN TAGS BECOME MORE USEFUL?

Tying tags into the success of digital media companies can be a big driver for change, and often the technology is already in place to do this. As Justin Ellis recently pointed out in a Nieman Lab article about the *New York Times*’ tagging process, not only are tags effective for topical organization, but they “can also help newsrooms create new products and find inventive ways of collecting content.”

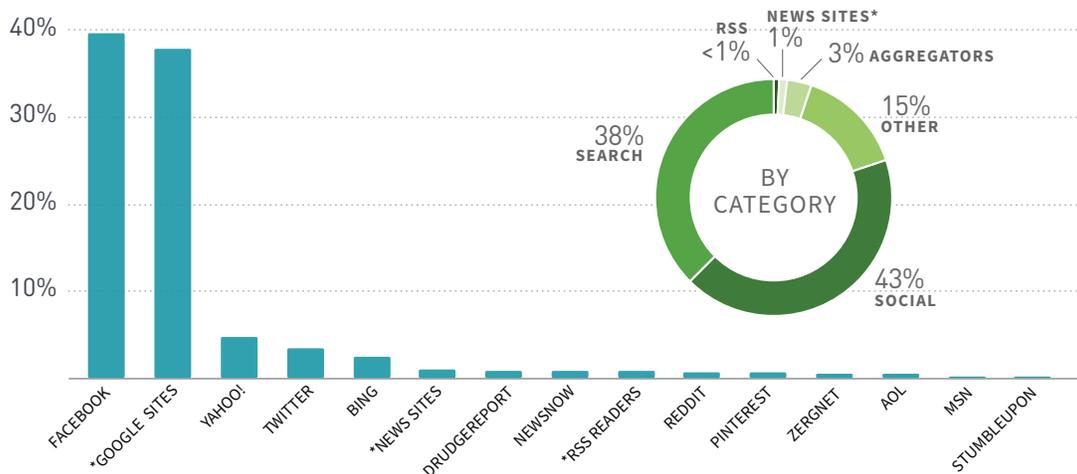
We’ll be highlighting great use of tags on our blog: blog.parse.ly.com. Have an example that you’d like to share?

Contact us: hello@parse.ly

In each **Authority Report** we show the top referral sources to our network. Each of these shows a snapshot of the traffic to our network in time and reflects both industry trends and shifts in our publishing clients.

OF NOTE: Facebook has surpassed Google as a top referring site to the publishers in Parse.ly's network.

TOP TRAFFIC REFERRAL SOURCES MAY-JULY 2015

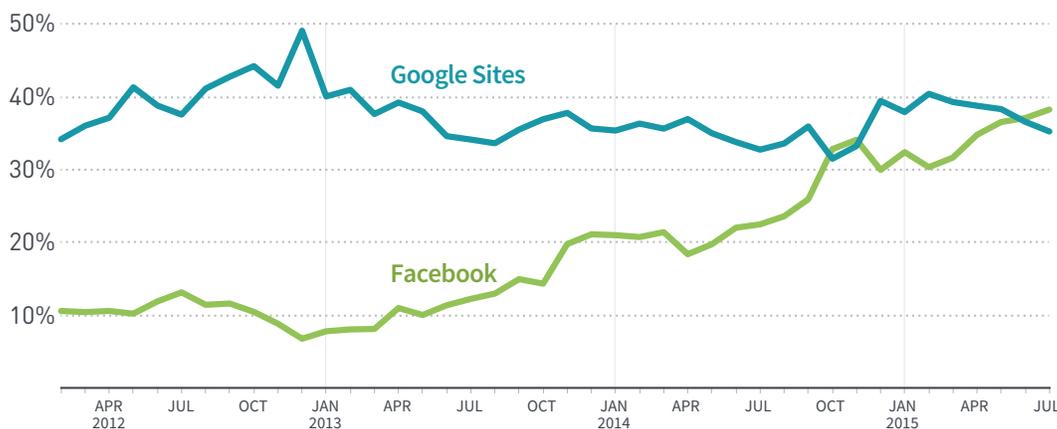


*GOOGLE SITES: aggregate all of Google-owned properties, e.g. Google.com, Google.ca, and Google News.

*NEWS SITES: We calculate News Sites using 100 of the top news websites ranked by Comscore, Alexa rankings, and other social media data sources, like Newswhip.

*RSS READERS: all external traffic from RSS reader services such as Feedly.com

PARSE.LY NETWORK TRAFFIC FROM GOOGLE VERSUS FACEBOOK



ABOUT PARSE.LY

Thousands of writers, editors, site managers, and technologists already use Parse.ly to understand what content draws in website visitors, and why. Using our powerful dashboards and APIs, customers build successful digital strategies that allow them to grow and engage a loyal audience.

