

The Age of Media Agnosticism

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The average American visited 87 domains and 2,600 Web pages in September according to [Nielsen](#). Outside the U.S., these numbers tend to be [smaller](#). What's more, fresh data indicates that just a few sites dominate the mix.

A study recently released by [Drake Direct](#) revealed that Facebook accounts for 25 percent of all page views. Facebook is also rapidly closing in on Google – the top site in terms of visitors.

Curiously, the diversity of the sites we frequent remains small even though our choices have grown infinitely. According to Andreas Weigend, former chief scientist at Amazon.com, more data will be generated this year by individuals than in the [entire history of mankind](#) through 2008.

Still, the information fire hose and finite attention spans are having a dramatic impact on media. Cheryl Cook, Edelman's executive vice president of media relations, sees the press splitting into two camps: one focused on entertainment and celebrity-driven stories, the rest turning to deeper analysis.

A new study in development by [The Poynter Institute](#) reflects such shifts. They have classified seven types of news consumers:

- **Traditional:** those who devote a set amount of time to their news habit every day;
- **Passive:** multi-taskers who don't devote time to news but have an "ambient awareness" and tune in as their interest is piqued;
- **Pursuit:** people who seek out a specific piece of information, such as the full version of a story they heard about;
- **Social:** under 30-types who rely on the news to "find them" [via social networks](#);
- **Partisan:** individuals who turn to select news providers based on their own outlooks (e.g. DailyKos or FOX News);
- **Continuous:** "information addicts" who are always plugged in; and
- **Post-traditional:** news consumers who get it all online and have "loose loyalties" for certain sites.

The upshot of all of this is we are entering new era of media agnosticism. Faced with infinite choices, powerful search tools and equally helpful friends, we're adapting our habits and becoming less loyal to general sources than we once were. Many rely on the news to find us rather than our needing to seek it out. Those who do hunt for news are likely to do so via a single outlet of their choosing and/or a search engine, [or even YouTube](#).

The takeaway is that it's clear that social networks, search engines and niche verticals (like blogs) are becoming our most essential conduits of information. This is important given the number of impressions required to create a behavior change. (The [Edelman Trust Barometer](#) found that people need to hear something three to five times and from three to five sources before they will trust it.)

The upshot is that the more engaged companies can be in relevant social spaces and thinking about the intersection between PR and search, the more likely it is they will be able to influence their stakeholders in the Age of Media Agnosticism.

For more information, please contact [Steve Rubel](#).