Understanding Reddit

Elliot T. Panek

Social Media Handles

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Associated Websites

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- [Elliot Panek - Google Scholar](#)

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Profile

[Elliot Panek](#) studies the uses and effects of digital media from sociological and psychological perspectives. He is the author of *Understanding Reddit,* and has published research in top-tier academic journals on the social dynamics of online communities, social media and narcissism, texting while driving, media addiction, and media use and political polarization. His research has been covered by The New York Times, The Chicago Tribune, Time.com, and The North Korea Times. He is currently an Associate Professor at the University of Alabama, where he leads the Alabama Reddit Research Group, mentors Ph.D. and undergraduate students, and teaches courses on social media, communication research methods, content creation, and film history.

Reddit

An Overview

[10 Reddit Statistics Every Marketer Should Know in 2021 [Infographic]](#)

- At the end of 2020, there were 52 million daily active Reddit users worldwide. This marks a 44 percent year-over-year increase from October 2019's 36 million.

- In 2021, Reddit statistics showed that it was the tenth most-used social networking site in the United States. 18 percent of US adults say they are Reddit users.

- More than six out of every ten Reddit users (63.2 percent) identify as male.

- Reddit statistics show that just over half (50.78 percent) of its desktop traffic originates from the US, a clear sign of its popularity there.

- On average, Reddit users spend 10 minutes and 23 seconds on the site per visit. During this time, the average Reddit user visits just over eight different pages.

- The bounce rate of Reddit's total site visits stands at 38.5 percent. In other words, nearly four in ten users who visit Reddit leave the site after having visited just one page.

- According to the latest Reddit statistics, the site is the most popular among users in the 25 to 29 age group.

- As of 2021, there were more than 2.8 million subreddits

- Reddit considers a subreddit, or community, to be active when it receives at least five comments a day. According to the latest Reddit statistics, there are currently more than 130,000 active communities on the platform.

- An analysis of 30,000 top posts in the top subreddit shows that the best performing Reddit posts have titles that are under 120 characters. More specifically, titles of between 60 and 80 characters perform the best and receive the highest amount of upvotes.

- Reddit users are now watching 1.4 billion native videos on the platform every month.

Understanding Reddit

Understanding Reddit - 1st Edition - Elliot T. Panek - Routledge Book

This book offers a comprehensive scholarly overview of Reddit, one of the most popular and least studied social platforms of the early 21st century.

The book inspires new ways of thinking about Reddit, considering it from multiple perspectives: through a historical lens, as a site where identity is forged, as a democracy, as a community, and as a news aggregator and distributor. By bringing theories from computer-mediated communication, communication studies, and sociology to bear on original, large-scale observational analyses of Reddit's communities, this book provides a uniquely comprehensive overview of the platform's first 15 years. Understanding Reddit will help us make sense of how rapidly growing communities function in an era of mass online anonymity.

Serving both as a primer on how social behavior on Reddit plays out, and as a way of locating it within multiple theoretical traditions, the book will offer important insights to scholars and students in the disciplines of communication, media studies, information science, internet and emerging media studies, and sociology.

Reddit's Social Dynamics: Evolving Research

Participation

During the early years of the internet, communication scholars referred to groups of people interacting online as "virtual communities." The use of the word "communities" was, in part, an effort to legitimize online group interaction.

Early online group communication took place among relatively small groups of dedicated individuals. In terms of their sizes and the frequency with which group

members interacted with one another, they were not unlike the relatively small groups of people with whom we repeatedly interacted in offline communities. As online groups grew to the size of large cities, they began to seem more like two other types of groups: audiences (large groups of people passively consuming what a small number of creators produce) or crowds (larger groups of people that assemble, maybe interact for a short period of time, and then disperse).

Many of Reddit's discussion threads contain posts from thousands of different users, which seems to illustrate that online communities are possible in an era of mass participation.

As subreddits grow, participation within the subreddits tends to become more highly concentrated among a relatively small sub-group of users within each subreddit…subreddits tend to start off resembling communities and become more like audiences.

 A certain type of online group, comprised of a certain type of people discussing a certain type of topic, actually becomes *more* community-like as it grows.

Retention

If there is a high "turnover" or "churn" among group members, the group may have an outward appearance of stability (i.e., the group may maintain a steady overall number of participants from month to month) while never creating the conditions under which

lasting social bonds and knowledge of one's fellow member are likely to take root. Such a group would be more like a crowd than a community.

Groups that rapidly cycle through members could be said to have a high rate of churn, a high turnover, low retention, or low "stickiness."

Large subreddits generally have a low, stable churn and are more stable in month-to-month retention.

"Stickiest" Subreddits

The dynamism of most subreddits causes the subreddits' "stickiness" to be difficult to assess. Over time, the vast majority of contributors to comments within a subreddit's discourse leave and don't come back. These individuals are replaced by new entrants, and the community, as a whole, continues to flourish even as its contributing members are continuously swapped out…this is the case with most online communities, given the ease with which individuals can come and go, and the lack of clear incentives for sticking around.

The general pattern is that when subreddit cohorts are smaller, a larger percentage of the cohort is retained.

As a cohort ages, fewer and fewer of its members tend to return.