Onclusive

2019

Global Journalism Report

Top 100 author platforms list released.
Top 50 editorial topics list released.

The State of Journalism

The world of journalism has never been as dynamic as it is today. Thanks to the digital media revolution and the emergence of self-publishing platforms it has become easier than ever for individuals to create and distribute editorial content of all forms. This has led to a proliferation of independent, digital-first authors who are either affiliated with a variety of media outlets, or solely publishing from their own personal brands. **The result: the lines have blurred between news and entertainment, and the practice of journalistic expression has become democratized.**

There are obvious benefits to consumers in having access to real-time information from a broad set of perspectives. Digital media has given us an alternative to the bias of publishing monopolies, not the least of which is corporate and political influence. But democracy comes at a cost, and this "democratization" of the media is no exception. We all want more choice. The challenge is when the choices are endless, and when journalist credibility is no longer a simple function of the reputation of the publication to which they contribute.

It may be the case that, due to a legacy of high editorial standards and extremely competitive newsrooms, journalists from established media outlets like The New York Times and the Wall Street Journal can be trusted for quality, accurate reporting. However, truthful, informative, and entertaining content is not limited to the media elite, and some may argue that the editorial fringes provide comparable valuable.

To fully understand the transformation which the world of journalism is undergoing, Onclusive analyzed 2.1 billion pieces of editorial content between Quarter 1 2018 and Quarter 1 2019. The numbers tell a story of an author ecosystem which is fragmenting across publication tiers, editorial topics, and content formats.

The Numbers

Between Q1 2018 and Q1 2019 there was a decrease in the percentage of authors who contributed for Tier 1 publications, and an increase in the percentage of authors who contributed for Tier 3 publications. In Q1 2019, 15% of authors contributed to Tier 1 publications, down from 26% in Q1 2018. Conversely, in Q1 2019, 41% of authors contributed to Tier 3 publications, up from 25% in Q1 2018.

Percentage of Authors by Publication Tier
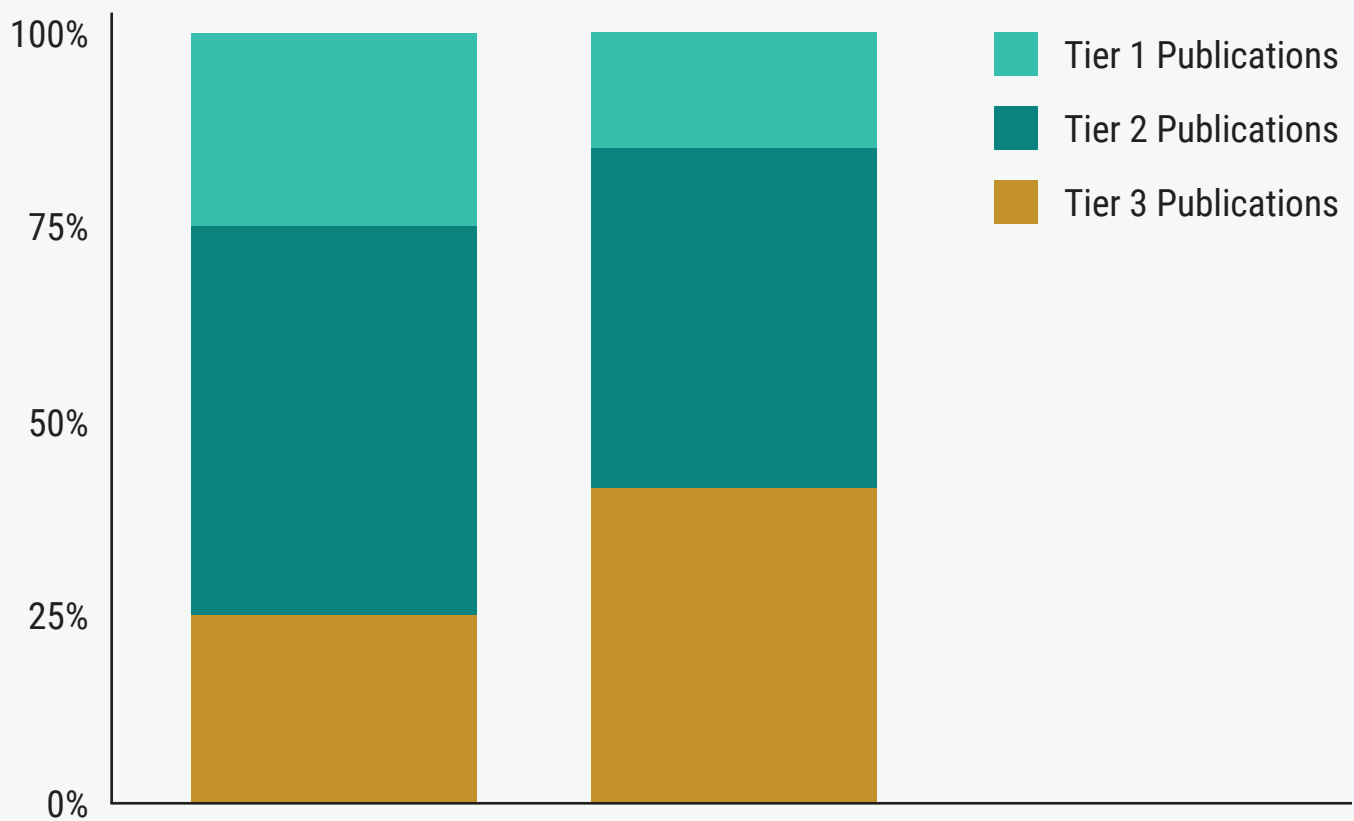
This data represent a decline in the number of authors who would generally be considered "professional journalists" based on the association of Tier 1 publications with the largest, most established media outlets, and Tier 3 publications representing the **growing list** of independent, niche content sites and blogs.

Inside the Newsroom

The traditional newsroom is changing in shape and form, and is declining in overall size and scope. According to the **Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Employment Survey**, newsroom employment in the U.S. dropped 23% between 2008 and 2017, and paid positions as reporters and news correspondents are **projected to drop another 10% by 2026**. And while all positions may not be full-time and on-staff, certain media companies continue to employ a fair number of journalists overall, including a number of major metro newspaper properties. The Top 100 Author Platforms List ranks digital publications by their volume of contributing authors.

Top 100 Author Platforms List

#	Platform	Authors	#	Platform	Authors
1	Medium	1,689,753	26	CNN	4,113
2	Yahoo	28,032	27	The Wall Street Journal	4,092
3	Huffington Post	15,450	28	LA Times	4,012
4	MSN	9,236	29	BBC	3,985
5	The Guardian	9,023	30	Time	3,926
6	The New York Times	8,271	31	The Roanoke Times	3,851
7	Washington Times	7,132	32	Stuff	3,822
8	Washington Post	6,799	33	Nature	3,807
9	Sydney Morning Herald	6,788	34	Telegraph	3,792
10	The Daily Mail	6,744	35	Vice	3,732
11	USA Today	6,559	36	Bloomberg	3,607
12	Business Insider	6,395	37	The State	3,589
13	Chicago Tribune	6,194	38	Mirror	3,490
14	The Star	6,153	39	CNBC	3,458
15	Independent	6,032	40	NPR	3,271
16	Seattle Times	6,027	41	Stars and Stripes	3,208
17	Miami Herald	6,024	42	The Atlantic	3,149
18	US News	5,952	43	Houston Chronicle	3,125
19	New Observer	5,364	44	Denver Post	3,063
20	St. Louis Post	4,953	45	Boston Globe	3,023
21	Forbes	4,819	46	Reuters	3,019
22	The Globe and Mail	4,723	47	AOL	2,967
23	Charlotte Observer	4,573	48	AZ Central	2,874
24	The Sacramento Bee	4,257	49	National Post	2,839
25	Fox News	4,255	50	Baltimore Sun	2,831

Top 100 Author Platforms List (cont.)

51	Milwakee Journal Sentinal	2,779		76	Philadelphia Inquirer	2,144
52	Times Union	2,768		77	Billings Gazette	2,135
53	Salon	2,729		78	The Times UK	2,088
54	Murcury News	2,679		79	The Kansas City Star	2,069
55	Associated Press	2,655		80	MarketWatch	2,052
56	News.com.au	2,574		81	AlterNet	1,999
57	Orlando Sentinel	2,531		82	Irish Times	1,981
58	The Conversation	2,514		83	New York Post	1,978
59	Slate	2,482		84	The Sun	1,964
60	Herald Online	2,457		85	CBC	1,954
61	NBC News	2,435		86	San Antonio Express News	1,908
62	Modesto Bee	2,423		87	Sun Sentinal	1,869
63	Missoulian	2,410		88	Ledger Enquirer	1,857
64	Star Tribune	2,398		89	Star Telegram	1,773
65	New York Daily News	2,388		90	Boston Herald	1,738
66	NZ Herald	2,382		91	Christian Science Monitor	1,659
67	Pittsburgh Post Gazette	2,347		92	Bleacher Report	1,616
68	Buzzfeed	2,330		93	Independent.ie	1,588
69	ABC News	2,317		94	Newsday	1,588
70	Lexington Herald	2,305		95	The Daily Beast	1,552
71	Seeking Alpha	2,298		96	Brisbane Times	1,551
72	Macon Telegraph	2,237		97	The Hill	1,535
73	Entrepreneur	2,188		98	All Africa	1,532
74	The Age	2,184		99	Daily Record	1,523
75	Real Clear Politics	2,177		100	Columbus Dispatch	1,517

Topics of Interest

There is a vast spectrum of editorial topics about which today's author is writing. Topics like business, sports, politics and entertainment remain popular themes, but articles about the environment, religion, and information technology are also top subjects. The Top 50 Editorial Topics List ranks each major topic by its volume of contributing authors.

Top 50 Editorial Topics List

#	Topic	Value	#	Topic	Value
1	Business / Professional	1,811,426	26	Automotive	55,413
2	National News	1,784,878	27	Industrials	55,073
3	Information Technology	1,767,171	28	Education	53,042
4	Consumer Products	1,255,406	29	Real Estate	46,186
5	Lifestyle	1,205,435	30	International News	41,984
6	Fashion	1,160,499	31	Recipes	34,330
7	Travel/Tourism/Geographic	1,148,880	32	Food & Beverage	33,527
8	Sports	1,095,771	33	Literature	28,369
9	Society	587,594	34	Law	24,987
10	Arts	582,623	35	Transportation	22,965
11	Local News	573,709	36	Energy	21,813
12	Recreation	565,438	37	Theater	21,114
13	Politics	564,910	38	Gossip/Tabloid	19,012
14	Finance/Banking	563,152	39	Aerospace Defense	12,340
15	Health/Medical	558,966	40	Agricultural Products	9,803
16	Media/Television	548,575	41	Oil Gas	9,353
17	Music	536,034	42	Hotels/Restaurants/Leisure	9,346
18	Environment	532,536	43	Telecommunication Services	9,313
19	Science	531,226	44	Marketing/Advertising	9,164
20	Film	524,137	45	Retailing	8,824
21	Organisations	515,680	46	Insurance	8,780
22	Games	514,296	47	Electronics	8,530
23	Religion	512,332	48	Construction Engineering	8,110
24	Government	508,210	49	Human Resources	6,779
25	Health Care	56,885	50	Biotechnology	5,618

Increased Editorial Volume

While we are witnessing a wider distribution of authors across publication types and editorial topics, we are also seeing an increase in the overall number of articles published per author. In our previously published Global Media Report we cite a 78% overall increase in the average number of articles per author. This may reflect the increasing demands of journalists as media companies downsize their staff writers who are now covering multiple beats and are required to deliver higher output. This also illustrates how the greater ease of publishing across newer digital channels is resulting in more content being generated overall.

But with these increased pressures on journalists, content is becoming more and more "snackable". When analyzing the overall length of articles we saw the number of characters per article drop by 18%, from an average 2,324 characters per article to 1,967 per article. So, while authors are producing more articles, on average they are shorter pieces.

The length of an article matters. One of the key performance indicators of digital content is how well it ranks in search engines like Google, since a large portion of publisher web traffic comes through these portals. And while few people know exactly how Google's search algorithms are tuned (and since the tuning changes frequently) the best we can do is look at testing data. A recent study from Backlink.io shows a direct correlation between the length of the article and its appearance on the first page of Google's search results—the ultimate destination for any piece of content.

## Content Total Word Count
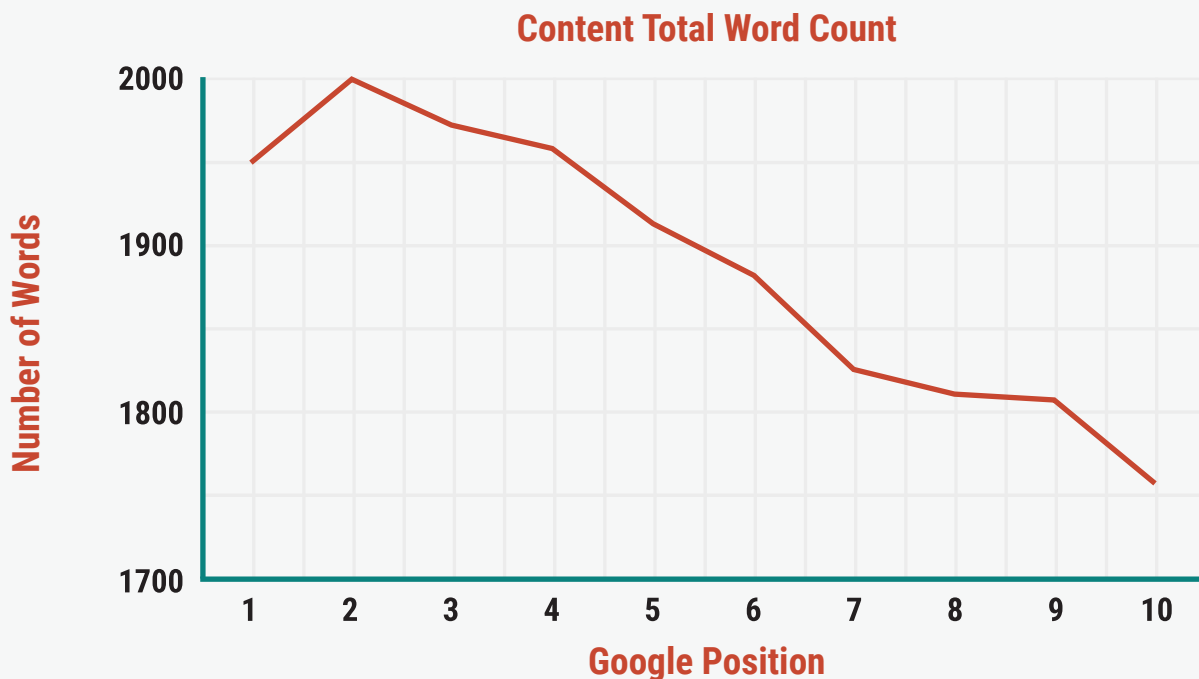
Generally, the longer the article, the higher the Google rank. Specifically, the average word count of a Google first page result is 1,890 words, so while the 18% decrease in article length which we've observed may not yet be having an impact, a continued trend in this direction may yield negative consequences. Journalists take note.

The Power of Influence

Google is not the only factor in the impact of editorial content. Today, authors build their own independent brands, separate from the publications to which they contribute. They organically develop their own loyal audiences, many of which even rival Tier 1 media outlets in scale. Key indicators to influence include the total volume of content an author produces, their number of social media followers, and the total amount of social media engagement an author earns.

When analyzing the distribution of influence across the author ecosystem, it appears that a relatively low percentage of authors, less than 2%, commands the highest level of influence. The majority of influence is largely spread out across a bell-curve distribution indicating that this new form of currency is actually accessible to a broad set of writers. Today, an author only needs an influence score of 70% or higher to be in the top 2% of influencers.

Author Influence Distribution
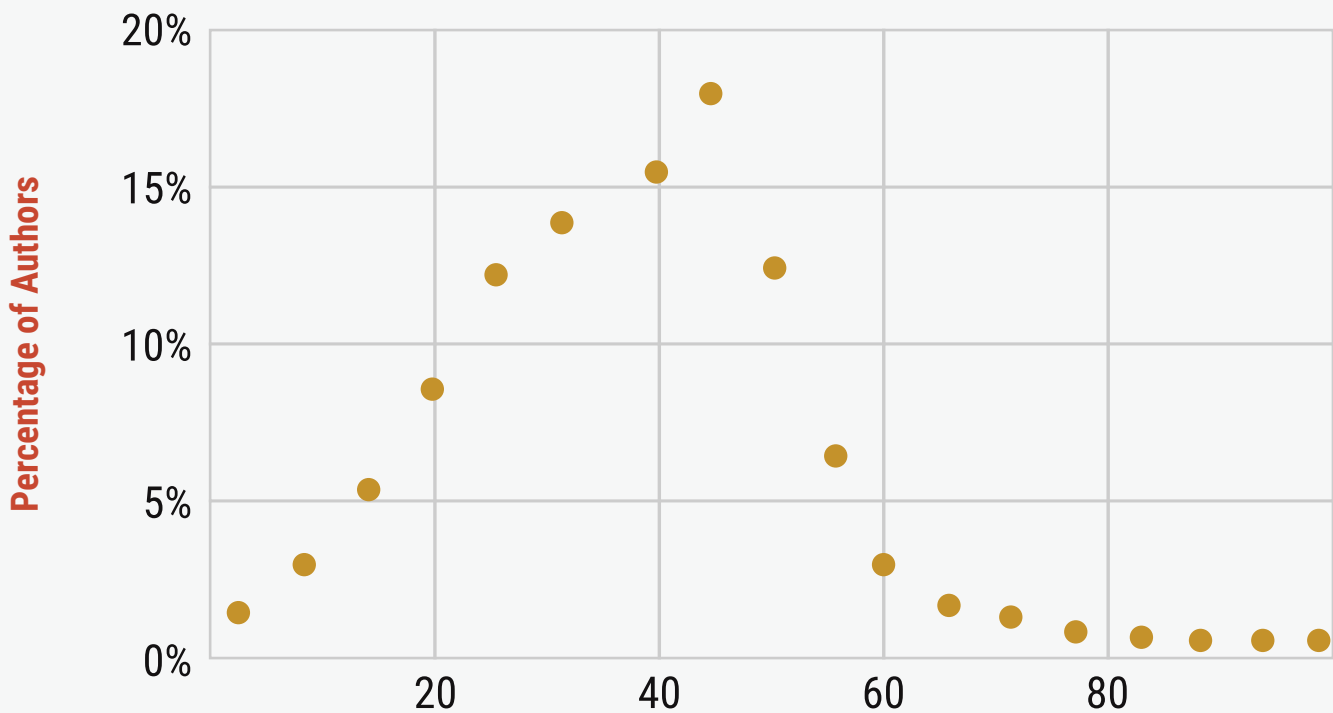
Sentiment Still Matters

While influence is an important characteristic when understanding the author ecosystem, another critical factor is the general sentiment of the author. What is their tone in social media, are they largely positive, do they typically take a more negative tone, or does most of their commentary take a generally neutral position? In the PR world, knowing both the level of influence as well as the general tone and sentiment of a journalist is important.

The charts here and on the following pages show the distribution of sentiment across a sample of authors in the ecosystem. The first chart to the right aggregates all authors into three general categories; positive, neutral, negative. The simplest interpretation of this data is that most authors convey a neutral sentiment most the time, about one quarter are generally positive, and the minority of authors are mostly negative in their tone.

Author Sentiment

Legend: Positive, Neutral, Negative
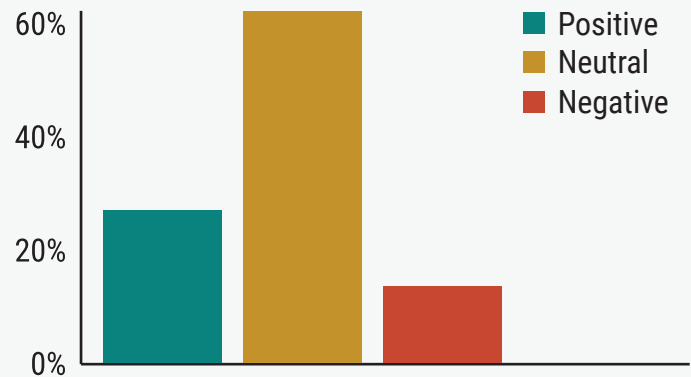
However, most authors take a different tone based on a given topic, versus always being positive, neutral, or negative. The below charts represent the full percentage distribution of commentary that is positive, neutral, or negative compared to the overall distribution of authors. In other words, what percentage of authors' articles are conveying a particular sentiment? For example in this first chart, 20% of most authors' articles are positive.
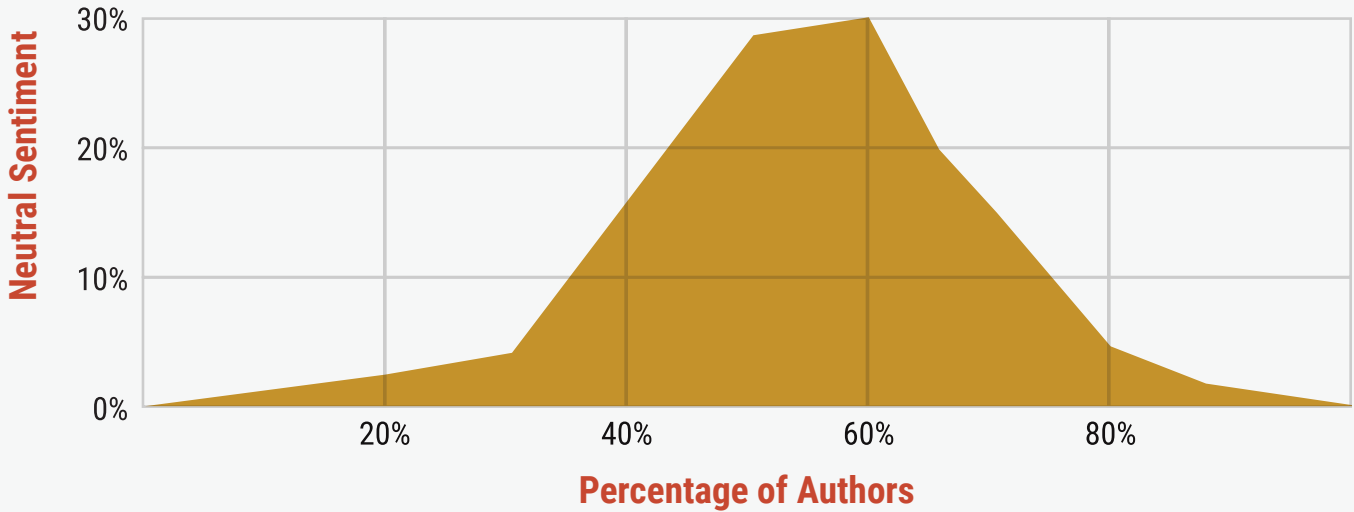
Positive Sentiment - Article Distribution

Positive Sentiment (y-axis)

Percentage of Authors (x-axis)
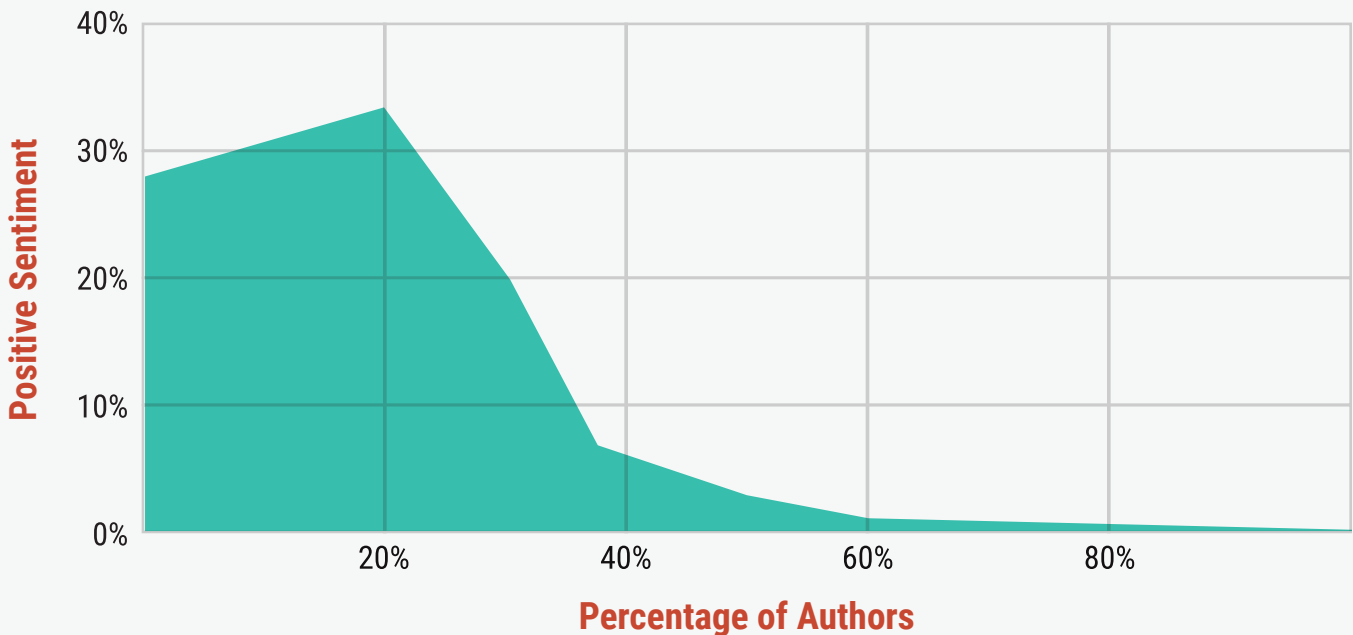
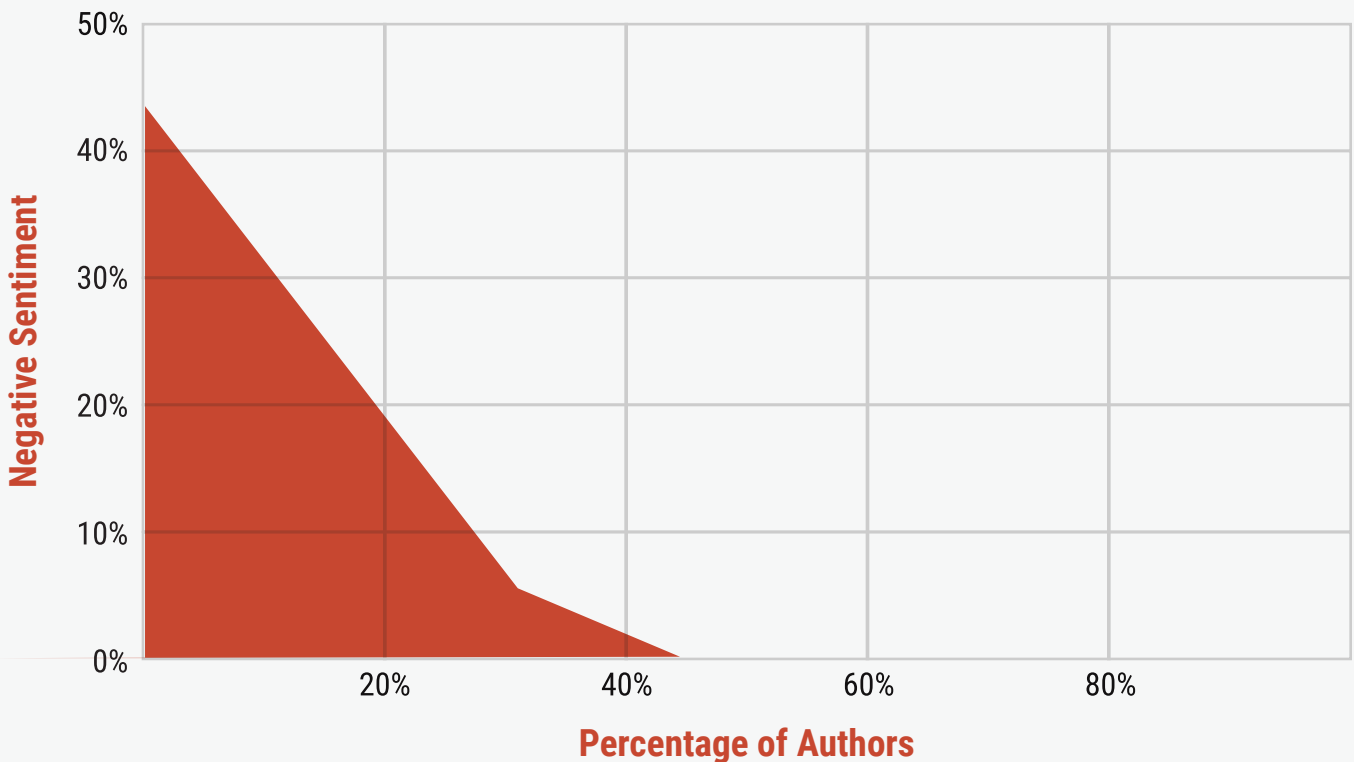# Sentiment Also Matters (cont.)

Neutral Sentiment - Article Distribution

In this next chart, 60% of most authors' articles are neutral.

Negative Sentiment - Article Distribution

In this last chart, 10% of most authors' articles are negative.

Key Takeaways

- There was a dramatic decrease in the percentage of authors whocontributed for Tier 1 publications, and a significant increase in thepercentage of authors who contributed for Tier 3 publications

- The number of professional journalists continues to decline overalland the ratio of PR professionals to journalists is at an all-time high

- There is an extremely diverse set of editorial subjects being writtenabout, well beyond the most obvious news topics

- The average number of articles per author is increasing while theaverage length of those articles is in decline, potentially leading tonegative consequences on search engine results

- Author influence is increasingly important and largely distributedacross the author ecosystem, with less than 2% of authorscommanding the highest level of influence

- Author sentiment continues to be a factor in the media relationsprocess, with most authors conveying a neutral sentiment most thetime and fewer authors predominantly positive or negative in theiroverall tone

Heading towards 2020, many PR departments are changing the way they think about the target journalist list. More than ever, businesses are evaluating communications performance by connecting content to actual business outcomes, and it is not always easy to predict which journalists can help drive a brand's Power of Voice™ or deliver high PR Attribution™.

Today's media relations pro requires real-time insights into the quality, engagement, influence, and impact of their placements. This is the only meaningful way to discover which journalists to develop relationships with. But discovery is just the beginning. Once the most important journalists have been identified, breaking through to them can be challenging in today's fragmented media ecosystem. According to the **US Census** there are now more than 6 PR pros for every journalist. Getting a reporter's attention has never been easy. Now, it requires data science.

But you don't need a PHD to survive in the new PR world—that is why we have artificial intelligence. The machines can now take over what has become an otherwise insurmountable tasks of reading, analyzing, and scoring billions of pieces of content every year, so communicators can focus on telling great stories.

Onclusive

Onclusive is the data science company for communications. We connect content to business outcomes for the first time, and leverage artificial intelligence to reveal which communications strategies drive actual brand engagement. The result is thousands of high-performance campaigns around the world. Onclusive developed the Power of Voice™ metric as a way to measure the quality of a brand's media coverage in relation to its competitors, and invented PR Attribution™ to measure the real impact that content is having on a company's bottom line. Onclusive was founded in 2011 and is headquartered in the San Francisco Bay Area.

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