

Newspaper sites draw 36 percent of Web audience in June

August 6 2009, By David B. Wilkerson

Newspaper Web sites attracted 70.3 million unique visitors in June, representing about 36 percent of all Internet users, according to a new Nielsen Online study commissioned by an industry trade group.

Newspaper [Web site](#) visitors generated 3.5 billion page views during the month, spending 2.7 billion minutes browsing the sites over more than 597 million total sessions, the Newspaper Association of America said Wednesday.

Nielsen used a new methodology to measure Web audience and traffic intended to greatly widen the sample size, rendering comparisons to prior months "invalid," the NAA said.

The industry is fighting to convince advertisers that American consumers still trust and read newspapers. Revenue from digital newspaper ads rose sharply during the 2005-07 period, particularly in the classified arena, fueled by a real-estate boom in many parts of the United States and solid job growth.

However, as the recession deepened during 2007, online revenue growth slowed down, stalled, and, as the economy cratered in 2008, moved into negative territory, where it has remained.

Some observers have been encouraged by earnings reports from the quarter ended June 30 from Gannett Co., [New York Times](#) Co., Media General and others, which suggest that declines in print and online ad

revenue are beginning to level off.

Also Wednesday, the NAA unveiled another study indicating that 82 percent of 3,000 adults who responded to a survey said they "took action" because of [newspaper advertising](#).

That study, from Mori Research, said 61 percent of those people clipped a coupon, while 50 percent purchased something advertised in the paper. Some 52 percent of the respondents visited a store.

Nearly 60 percent of those surveyed said they use newspapers to help plan shopping, or make purchase decisions.

The main threat to newspapers has been precipitous losses in print ad sales, led by 30 percent-plus declines in classifieds. It is these losses that have forced a number of newspapers to close, threaten closure or file for bankruptcy protection.

In March, Hearst Corp. opted to shut down print operations of the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, turning it into a Web-only publication with a small editorial staff. A month earlier, it warned that it might shut down the San Francisco Chronicle unless it could find a way to drastically cut operating costs.

Also in February, E.W. Scripps & Co. shut down Denver's Rocky Mountain News, while Philadelphia Newspapers LLC and Journal Register Co. filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection.

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