

2ND EDITION

The Divergent Preferences of Travel Media: US VS. CANADA

STUDY BY

Development Counsellors International
Tourism Practice

May 2017





While Canadian arrivals to the United States have declined over the past two years – largely due to the weakening of the Canadian dollar – Canada continues to be the largest source of inbound visitors to the U.S. As destinations look to maintain their position in the Canadian market pending the eventual currency strengthening, destination marketing organization public relations professionals in the U.S. continue to pitch media outlets north of the border. The goal is to raise consumer awareness by generating feature editorial coverage in order to stimulate demand.

In 2016, Development Counsellors International (DCI) surveyed 120 travel and lifestyle journalists in both the U.S. and Canada to determine the similarities and differences in editorial preferences. A similar study was conducted by DCI in 2014 allowing an analysis of changes in media preferences and trends. The findings not only aid U.S. and Canadian

media relations specialists in accurately presenting information to writers in both countries, but provide insight for international public relations professionals who are engaging with media from these countries at ITB, WTM, Vemex or the variety of international media marketplaces that have recently arrived on the global radar.

KEY FINDINGS

Finding #1

Instagram is being used much more frequently to spark story ideas

 U.S. Media  **92%** increase in use for story generation from 2014

 Canada Media  **29%** increase in use for story generation from 2014

Finding #2

Facebook and Twitter Are The Most Used Social Media For Distributing Content When in a Destination

U.S. Respondents Using Social Media to Distribute Content

2014



2016



Canadian Respondents Using Social Media to Distribute Content

2014



2016



Finding #3

More Time is Being Spent on Research Particularly Among U.S. Journalists

#2 Activity in Typical Day

U.S. Media
(versus not recognized in 2014)

#1 Activity in Typical Day

Canadian Media
(versus #3 activity in 2014)

Finding #4

Press Trips Gained Ground

A significantly higher percentage of respondents indicate that “Press/Fam Trip” in an email line captures their attention best.

2014



2016



Finding #5

It's Five O'Clock Somewhere



In 2016, the cocktail reception displaced the luncheon as the best time of day to attend a media event.

WHAT ARE THE MOST USEFUL ITEMS IN AN ONLINE MEDIA ROOM?

Similar to the 2014 findings, there is little change between the items Canadian and U.S. media find useful in an online media room. In 2014 Canadian media found press releases to be the second most useful item. This year, Canadian media named story ideas as the second most useful item, bumping press releases down to third.



Images/Photos



Press Release



Story Ideas



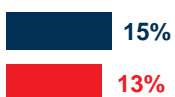
Itineraries



Other Response



Videos



WHAT SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS DO YOU REFERENCE TO SPARK STORY IDEAS?

While Facebook and Twitter still dominate as the primary social media platforms for story ideas, Instagram experienced a huge spike from the least referenced platform to the third most referenced platform among both U.S. and Canadian media. Pinterest also saw a ten percent spike in use among Canadian media, whereas it was not referenced at all in 2014.

In 2014, 25 percent of U.S. and Canadian media did not use any social media to spark story ideas. In 2016 a relatively similar number of journalists, 21 percent of U.S. and 27 percent of Canadian journalists, still do not use any social media platform to spark story ideas.

Facebook



Twitter



Instagram



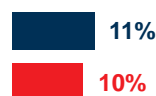
Linkedin



None



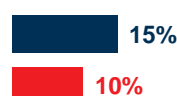
Pinterest



Youtube



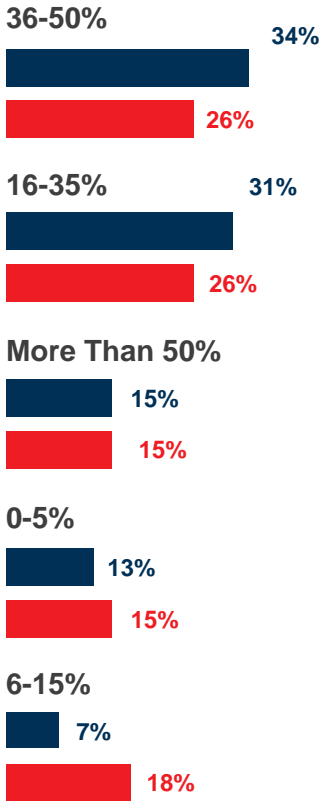
Other Response



OUT OF 100 PERCENT, WHAT PERCENTAGE OF YOUR STORIES BEGIN WITH A PITCH FROM A PUBLICIST?

This year saw a spike in journalists sourcing story ideas from publicist pitches. “The power of the pitch” has gained traction since 2014.

Percentage of Stories Originating From a Publicist’s Pitch



HOW DO YOU DETERMINE WHAT YOU WILL WRITE ABOUT?

In the 2014 study, media in the U.S. were asked how they determine the topic about which they will write. This year, the question was posed to both U.S. and Canadian media and found that journalists in both countries largely determine what to write in the same way. In 2014, 62 percent of U.S. respondents indicated that pitches influenced the topics on which they write. Pitches, in 2016, saw a slight decline in usefulness among media in the U.S. Even though they dropped in popularity among U.S. media, pitches were identified as the third most used tool in determining stories for Canadian media.

United States Media Preferences	
Personal interest	83%
Assignment	78%
Trends	65%
Pitches	52%
Other media	17%
Other (open end response)	17%
Colleagues	12%
Friends	3%

Canadian Media Preferences	
Personal Interest	80%
Assignment	67%
Pitches	43%
Trends	40%
Other media	22%
Other (open end response)	18%
Colleagues	15%
Friends	3%

The term “pitches” could refer to either a pitch from a publicist, a pitch from a freelance writer to an editor or from a junior editor to a senior editor. In any case, despite the slight decline in usefulness reported in this edition, the mutual collaboration through “pitching” still holds value in the billion-dollar business of media relations.

WHAT SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS DO YOU USE TO DISTRIBUTE CONTENT WHILE ON ASSIGNMENT IN A DESTINATION?

With nearly 90 percent of North Americans having access to the internet in 2016, the influence of digital media is even more powerful than in 2014. The social media platforms used by journalists to distribute content while on assignment in a destination, however, have gone unchanged. Facebook and Twitter still reign as top distribution platforms, tying for first place among Canadian media in this year's study.

Facebook



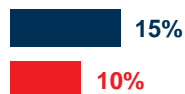
Twitter



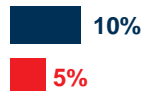
Instagram



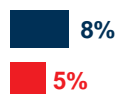
Linkedin



Youtube



Other Response



Pinterest



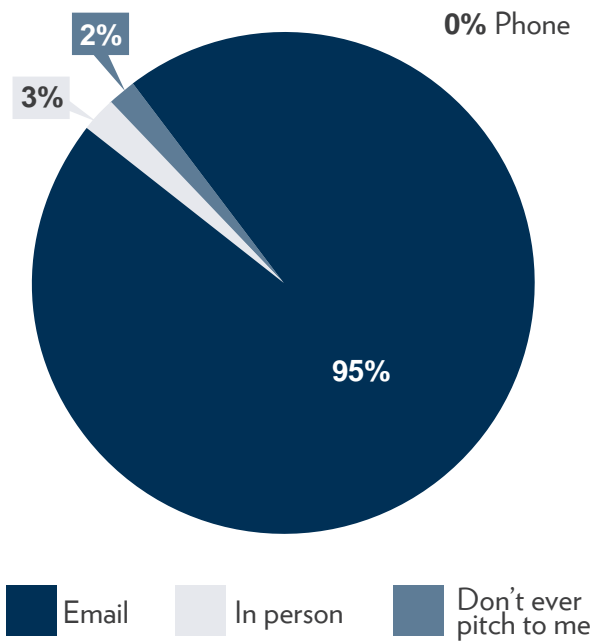
None



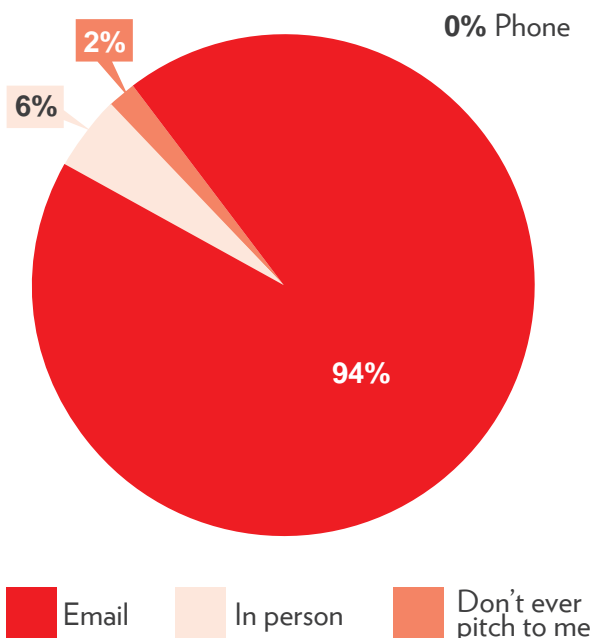
HOW DO YOU PREFER TO BE PITCHED A NEW STORY IDEA?

Email, as in 2014, continues to be the platform most preferred by journalists when being pitched a new story. None of the respondents report that phone calls are their preferred method of new story pitches.

USA



Canada



WHAT WORDS IN AN EMAIL SUBJECT LINE CATCH YOUR ATTENTION?

In 2014, when inquiring about the terms that best resonate with journalists in each market, the study found that journalists in the U.S. and Canada varied widely on the words that most likely lead them to open an email. The most recent study, however, finds distinct changes among media professionals from both markets. “Press/FAM Trips” remains the most captivating word for U.S. media, but jumped from the third to the first most captivating term for Canadian media. “New” dropped significantly among both markets from its position as number one among Canadian media and number two for U.S. media.

Press/FAM Trip



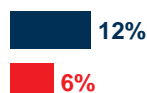
Invite or Invitation



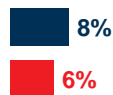
The Destination Name



New



Other Response



WHERE WE DIVERGE

Although there are more similarities between United States and Canadian Media in 2016 than in 2014, the markets still diverge on a few key issues.

1. WHAT ACTIVITY TAKES UP THE LARGEST PORTION OF YOUR DAY?

A day in the life of a travel journalist looks quite different today than it did in 2014. Research now ranks among the most time-consuming activity for journalists in both markets. For U.S. journalists, writing is still the most time-consuming activity – as was the case in 2014. For Canadian media, research displaced email and writing as the activity taking up the greatest amount of time. Email is taking up less of a journalist’s day in both markets.

United States Media Preferences



Canadian Media Preferences

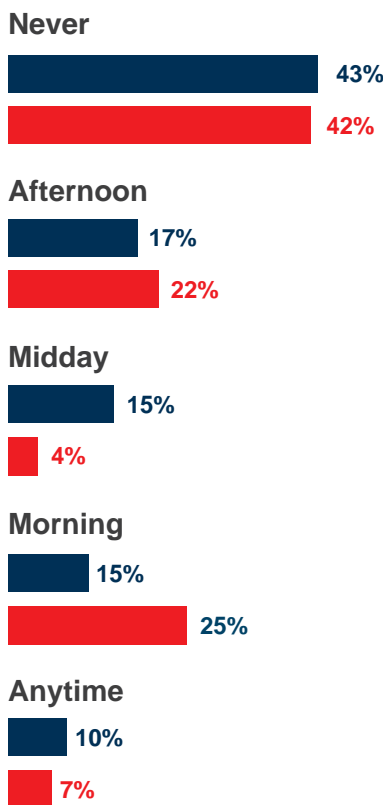


2. WHAT TIME OF THE DAY IS A GOOD TIME FOR A PUBLICIST TO PITCH YOU A STORY ON THE PHONE?

In keeping with the finding that neither journalists from the U.S. nor Canada prefer phone calls as a form of pitching, when asked what time of the day is best for a phone call, most journalists said either “never” or not unless the call is confirmed via email first.

Journalists from both markets who are willing to take phone calls differed in their timing preference. Canadian media professionals preferring morning or afternoon, while U.S. media professionals prefer later phone calls either in the afternoon or midday.

Media Preferences



3. WHAT IS THE BEST TIME OF DAY TO ATTEND A MEDIA EVENT?

It can be challenging to pull journalists away from writing, emailing, editing and researching for a bit of face time. In 2016, both markets have changed their preferred times to attend an event. Both U.S. and Canadian media agree a late afternoon/early evening cocktail reception is the most convenient, receiving a boost from second to first in both markets.

United States Media Preferences	
1st	Cocktail reception
2nd	Lunch
3rd	Dinner
4th	Breakfast
5th	Never

Canadian Media Preferences	
1st	Cocktail Reception
2nd	Dinner
3rd	Breakfast
4th	Lunch
5th	Never (no responses)

4. HOW MANY DAYS IS THE IDEAL LENGTH FOR A PRESS TRIP?

Both U.S. and Canadian media respond positively to the words “Press/FAM Trip” in the subject line of an email, but have varying ideas on the ideal length of a press trip. U.S. media prefer four-day trips while Canadian media prefer trips five days or longer.

United States Media Preferences	
5 or more days	49%
4 days	25%
3 days	24%
1-2 days	2%

Canadian Media Preferences	
5 or more days	41%
4 days	33%
3 days	20%
1-2 days	6%



ABOUT DCI

Development Counsellors International (DCI) is the expert in how North American travelers and business executives select destinations. We partner with destinations to increase visitor arrivals, disperse visitors, augment daily spend and increase business investment.

Since 1960, we have worked with more than 450 cities, regions, provinces, states and countries from our offices in both Canada and the United States.

Our areas of expertise include

- Tourism Research
- Destination Branding & Strategy
- Consumer Marketing
- Public Relations
- Digital & Social Media Marketing
- Travel Trade Marketing
- Business Event Sales



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Interested in learning more? We'd love to explore how we might assist your destination marketing organizations/convention bureau.

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