

ABC News' long-form journalism pays off on Twitter

Written by The Conversation

As they face a changing market for journalistic content, Australian news organisations are increasingly being forced to experiment with new approaches to telling their stories. The Australian Twitter News Index (ATNIX) for July 2017 shows that some new formats for investigative reports can generate considerable audience engagement – but old-fashioned commentary and opinion pieces also still manage to attract an audience.

Most notably, on 10 July 2017 ABC News recorded a significant increase in the number of tweets sharing its articles. This was due entirely to [political editor Chris Uhlmann's strident criticism of the Trump administration](#) (2,700 tweets that day), published from the sidelines of the G20 summit in Hamburg.

Given the strong and well-documented international response to Uhlmann's comments, the article actually receives fewer tweets than we might expect. His comments were republished or excerpted in text and video by news outlets around the world, so Twitter users did not necessarily need to go searching for the original piece.

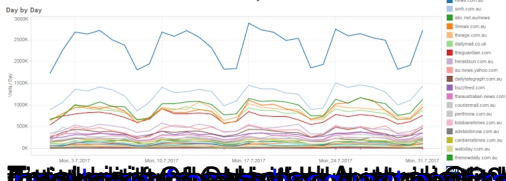
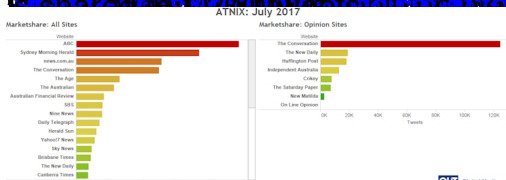
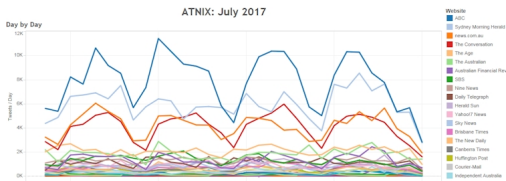
Still, over the course of the entire month the story was shared some 5,300 times on Twitter, making it the most widely shared ABC News article in July by a considerable margin. In keeping with a pattern established over past months, by contrast, the other major ABC News stories for the month retain a strong domestic focus.

A major report on [the sexual abuse of women by evangelical Christians](#) was shared 2,300 times; coverage of [Elon Musk's plans to build the world's largest lithium ion battery in South Australia](#) received 2,200 tweets. Another special report on leaked documents exposing [human rights abuses by Australian special forces in Afghanistan](#) was shared 2,100 times; and coverage of [a new map of historic massacres of indigenous Australians since 1788](#) was shared in 1,500 tweets.

The presence of two special reports is especially noteworthy here. These reports are long-form and investigative, presented in a format distinct from ordinary ABC News articles. We've seen these appear from time to time, and the inclusion of two such dossiers in ABC News' most shared articles during July clearly shows the strong public demand to this form of content.

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