

An ABC News story shows how strange going viral can be

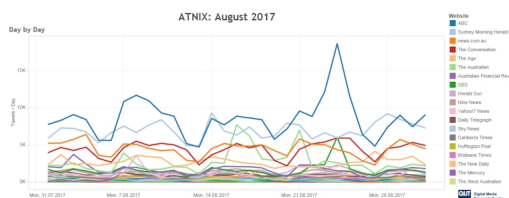
Written by The Conversation

ABC News has now firmly established itself as the nation's third most visited online news source, according to data from the Australian Twitter News Index (ATNIX). But one specific ABC News story shows social media's power to reach large and unexpected audiences.

A republication of a Conversation article exploring [what the bible really has to say about same-sex marriage](#) accounted for some 9,000 shares on the 24th of August, and nearly 16,000 for the entire month. ABC News saw 18,700 tweets in total on the 24th, which is nearly twice the number they can expect on an ordinary day.

But the story doesn't end there. Some 15,200 of the tweets linking to this story are due to a single post written in Korean and retweeted widely. From an Australian marriage equality survey, to an Irish-based bible scholar to going viral in Korea, news on Twitter can sometimes travel in mysterious, roundabout ways.

Meanwhile, the version of this article published [on The Conversation itself](#) received only 300 shares on Twitter.



Australian Twitter News Index, Aug. 2017. Axel Bruns / QUT Digital Media Research Centre

Because of its paywall, The Australian's articles are not usually widely shared on Twitter. But from mid-August onwards, a story on the role of [Donald Trump's alleged mafia links](#) in the rejection of his 1987 Sydney casino bid was shared some 17,500 times. This amounts to 21% of all the tweets linking to The Australian throughout the month.

Here, too, we can observe several interesting developments in the redistribution of the story. From its local origins Australian users forwarded it to a variety of US-based political commentators, who shared the article in their own right. It's a clear indication of how symbiotic the relationship between journalism and social media has now become: news outlets publish their stories, but social media users boost their visibility by circulating them through their own networks.

