



TrendMD: Reaching Larger, More Targeted Audiences by Distributing Scholarly Content Online

Paul Kudlow, Alan Rutledge & Gunther Eysenbach

To cite this article: Paul Kudlow, Alan Rutledge & Gunther Eysenbach (2014) TrendMD: Reaching Larger, More Targeted Audiences by Distributing Scholarly Content Online, Editors' Bulletin, 10:1, 11-15, DOI: [10.1080/17521742.2015.1031965](https://doi.org/10.1080/17521742.2015.1031965)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17521742.2015.1031965>



Published online: 08 Jun 2015.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 633



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Citing articles: 5 View citing articles [↗](#)

TrendMD: Reaching Larger, More Targeted Audiences by Distributing Scholarly Content Online

PAUL KUDLOW

Founder, CEO, TrendMD Inc.

ALAN RUTLEDGE

Co-Founder, Chief Technical Officer, TrendMD Inc.

GUNTHER EYSENBACH

Co-Founder, Chief Science Officer, TrendMD Inc.

With 5,000 new peer-reviewed articles published across over 27,000 online journals every day, scholarly publishers face challenges in maintaining their critical roles as content curators and distributors. Unless you know what you are looking for, it has become virtually impossible for online readers to discover relevant content. Similarly, authors, industry publishers, and funders of scholarly content are finding it increasingly difficult to attain the reach and visibility necessary to generate impact.

Traditionally, scholarly publishers ensured content visibility by circulating their print journals. But as content continues to migrate from print to

online – how can publishers optimize electronic distribution of content?

Current dissemination strategies, such as online press releases, certainly enhance visibility, but are limited to only a few selected publications. Other strategies, such as improving journal user interfaces and Open Access increasing availability help to enhance visibility, but these strategies fall short in getting the right content to the right audience.

TrendMD (www.trendmd.com), founded in 2013 by Dr Paul Kudlow, a physician-scientist, Dr Gunther Eysenbach, the Open Access publisher of JMIR Publications, and Alan Rutledge, a Silicon Valley software engineer, aims to

help readers find the most interesting scholarly content online, while giving publishers, authors, and funders new ways to reach engaged audiences. Using personalized links, TrendMD now recommends over nine million scholarly articles to two million readers per month, via a free content recommendation widget being piloted across a network of more than 150 premium Science, Technical and Medical (STM) journals and blogs, including *BMJ*, *Landes Bioscience*, and the *Journal of Medical Internet Research*.

The TrendMD widget, free for scholarly publishers to place on their websites (Figure 1), increases engagement and revenue. Links to content on a publisher's own site increase user "stickiness" and traffic, while links to third-party scholarly content generates revenue through an

evenly shared cost-per-click (CPC) and/or cost-per-impression (CPM) revenue model. TrendMD generates personalized recommendations through machine learning algorithms based on contextual targeting, user click behavior, and personalization (i.e., cookies) to intelligently distribute content to the right audience. While TrendMD's algorithms generate recommended links, the host-publisher retains full editorial control over both the content and appearance of the widget.

Publishers, authors, funders, and industry use TrendMD to enhance their scholarly content's visibility by distributing links to it beside relevant articles across websites using the widget. For publishers and authors, TrendMD grows their readership while driving more impact and, ultimately, more

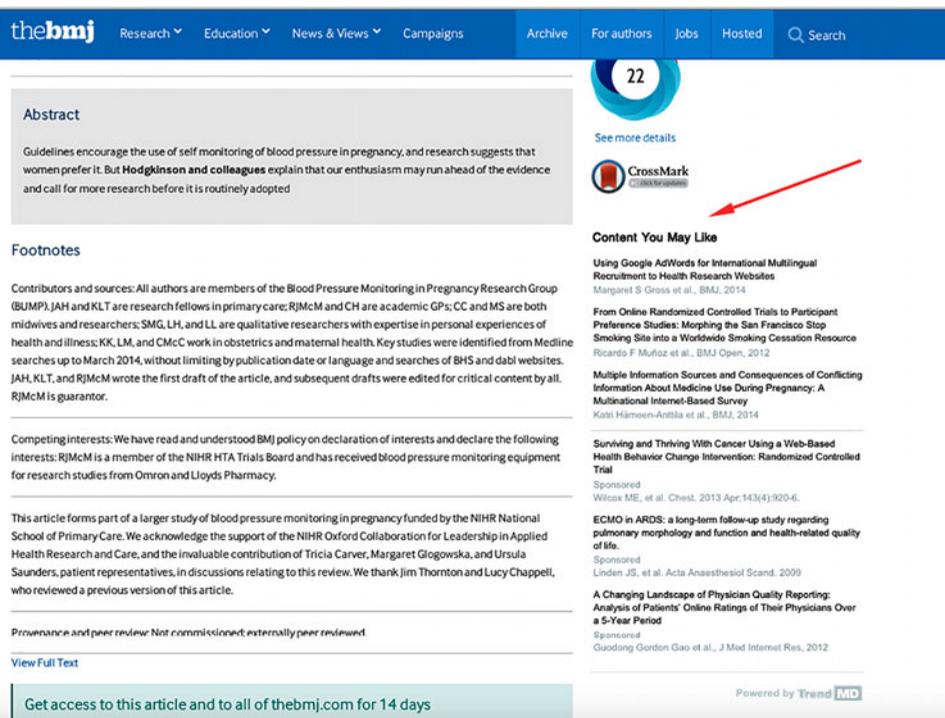


Figure 1. Screen shot of TrendMD widget on *BMJ*.

citations. For industry users, TrendMD enhances reader awareness about products and/or procedures featured in their published clinical trials.

Earlier this year, TrendMD ran a four-week pilot across 57 journals in the network (excluding data from *Landes Bioscience*) to answer these questions:

- (1) How does TrendMD’s widget affect the number of article-views per visitor?
- (2) What variables predict the click-through rate (CTR) on article links?
- (3) How does cross-publisher distribution of article links affect readership?
- (4) Are authors interested in post-publication distribution?

Our preliminary data suggest TrendMD’s widget increases user engagement for online journals; presenting unrelated links can further augment those results. When we randomly placed the widget below the abstract on article pages across network journals, we found

unique article views increased by an average of 7.3%. To test which variables affected CTRs, we grouped content into seven categories (eHealth, cardiology, nephrology, surgery, emergency medicine, internal medicine, and endocrinology) and compared the average CTR on related content recommendations (from the same category as the current article) versus unrelated content recommendations (from a different category from the current article). On average, links to unrelated content recommendation generated a 24% higher CTR.

To test the effects of cross-publisher distribution, we completed a randomized trial of 100 articles where 50 articles were distributed and 50 articles remained undistributed. Articles distributed across the network had an average of 191 views; those with no distribution had 102 views (Figure 2). This 87% increase also resulted in an overall 2–4% increase in daily new referral traffic to journals with distributed article links.

To assess demand for post-publication dissemination, we emailed 100 authors

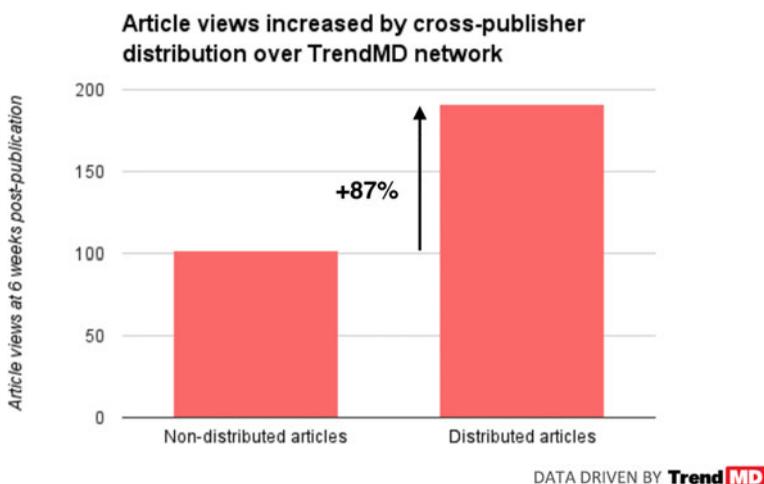


Figure 2. Articles distributed across the TrendMD network received an average increase in article views by 87% over a four-week period.

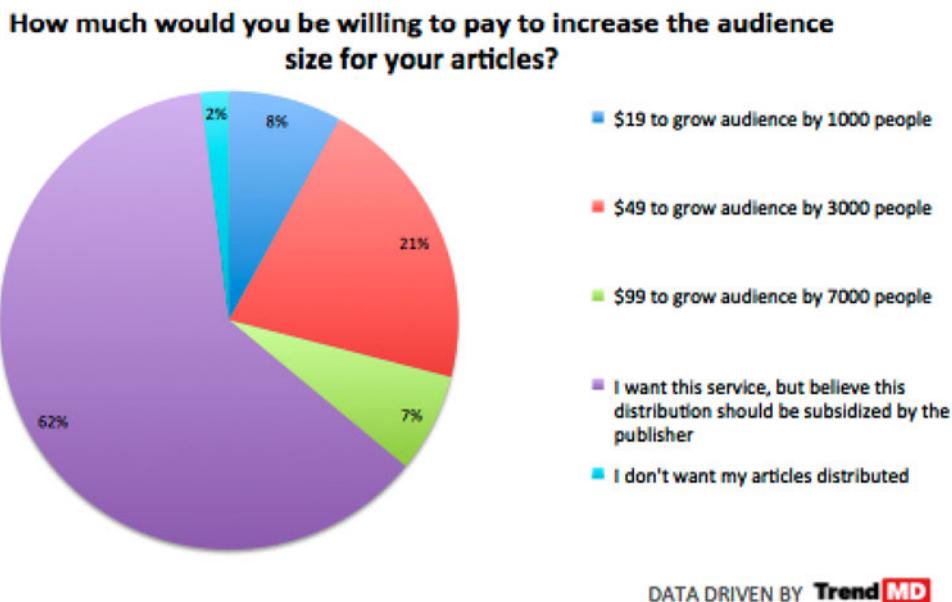


Figure 3. Majority of authors surveyed want their content distributed.

with content published by JMIR Publications. Out of 67 respondents, 97% would sign up for a service that guaranteed an increase in audience size for their content; 54% said they would pay for such a service (Figure 3).

Our data suggests that TrendMD is a powerful way to disseminate content, grow new readership, and boost engagement. As we grow our widget's network and pool of sponsored content, the next testing phase will focus on to what extent

TrendMD sponsored links can increase publishing revenue. And, while our data suggest that cross-publisher distribution leads to increased article views, we are examining how distribution affects other article-level and journal-level metrics such as altmetrics, citations, and Impact Factors.

To learn more and/or sign up to the TrendMD network, please visit www.trendmd.com or contact paul@trendmd.com.



**Paul Kudlow, MD
Founder, CEO**

Paul leads the executive management and strategic vision of TrendMD Inc. – a scholarly content discovery platform. He is on leave of absence from medical residency at the University of Toronto and remains an active clinical researcher, with publications in high-impact journals, such as the New England Journal of Medicine and the Canadian Medical Association Journal. Paul is passionate about medicine, informatics, and technologies designed to improve the dissemination of knowledge.



Gunther Eysenbach, MD, MPH, FACMI
Co-Founder, Chief Science Officer

Gunther has worked in the publishing industry for over 25 years since his days as medical student editing publications for Springer. He is recognized by many as one of the leading and most cited researchers in the field of eHealth, and is internationally known as an innovative entrepreneur, producer, editor and publisher of influential knowledge translation products and web ventures. He is the founder of JMIR Publications Inc., one of the first open access publishing companies in the world, which has grown from a single open access journal (1999) ranked #1 by impact factor in medical informatics, to a reputable publishing company with a portfolio of nine journals and the Medicine 2.0 conference series, focusing on technology and health. Gunther is also a Professor in Health Policy, Management and Evaluation at the University of Toronto, Director of Knowledge Translation at the Techna Institute, and Senior Scientist at Centre for Global eHealth Innovation, Toronto Research Institute and Toronto General Hospital (UHN).



Alan Rutlege, BSc
Co-Founder, Chief Technology Officer

Alan runs product and engineering at TrendMD. Prior to the acquisition of his first startup (run out of his Berkeley dorm room) by iLike (acquired by MySpace) at the age of 21, Alan was a developer at four startups – in fields ranging from autonomous robotics and machine vision to solar cells and solar thermal reactors. He was also a lead programmer at Idealab, who is the maker of more than 108 startups (including 33 acquisitions and 7 IPOs) and pioneer of Google's advertising technology. Previously Alan was a Program Manager for the SVP of Sales and Marketing for Microsoft North America as well as a management consultant in the enterprise software and telecommunications practices at The Boston Consulting Group.