Internet and its Readers: Should We Write Short or Long?

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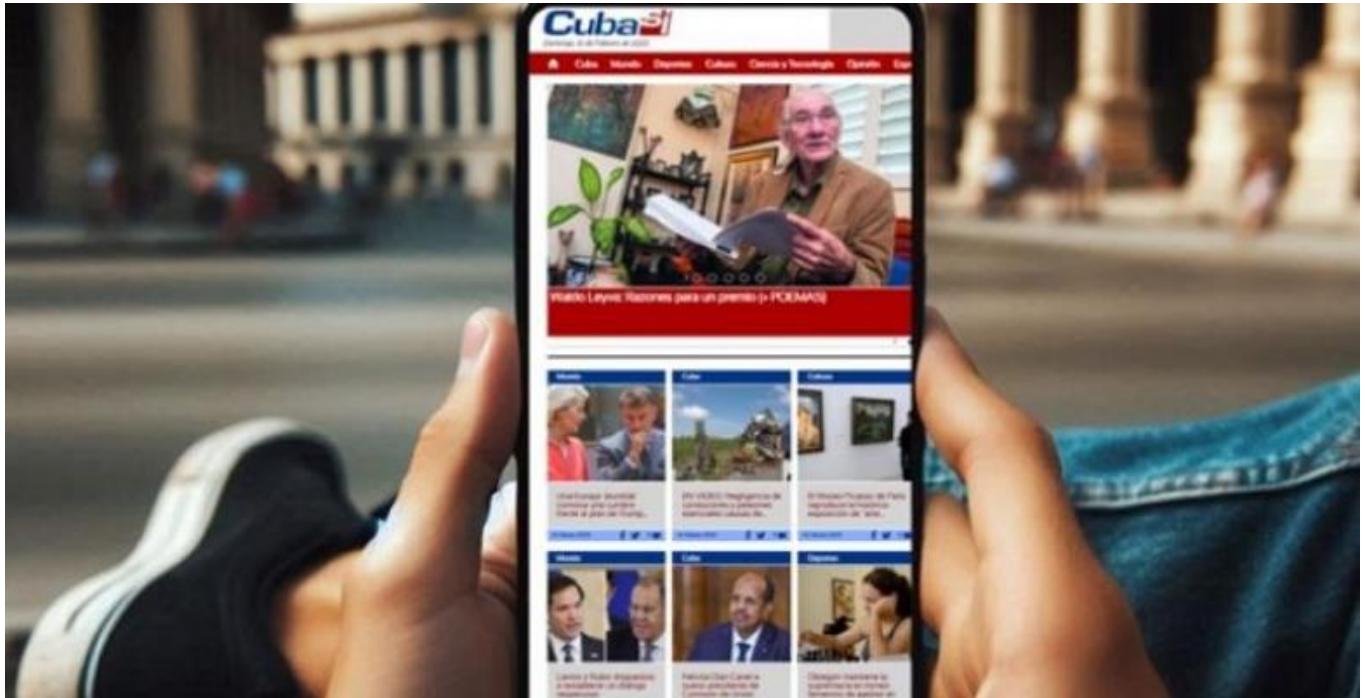
It's known that, as a trend, a good part of Internet users, especially young people, do not read more than two screens of text.

Following this custom, Don Quixote, Rayuela, The Magic Mountain, The Thousand and One Nights, Les Miserables, War and Peace... and many other anthological titles, are becoming known for the meager and not always efficient summaries offered by AI.

So, what can we do to adapt to the habits of Internet users and, at the same time, not contribute to their lack of culture?

In the case of the length of journalistic texts in particular, for some very repeated sentences the ground is shifting: "nobody reads those long works."

In fact, there's no specific rule for the length of these texts, neither for notes nor for author works, but SEO, positioning rules, are setting some guidelines, precisely for being read.
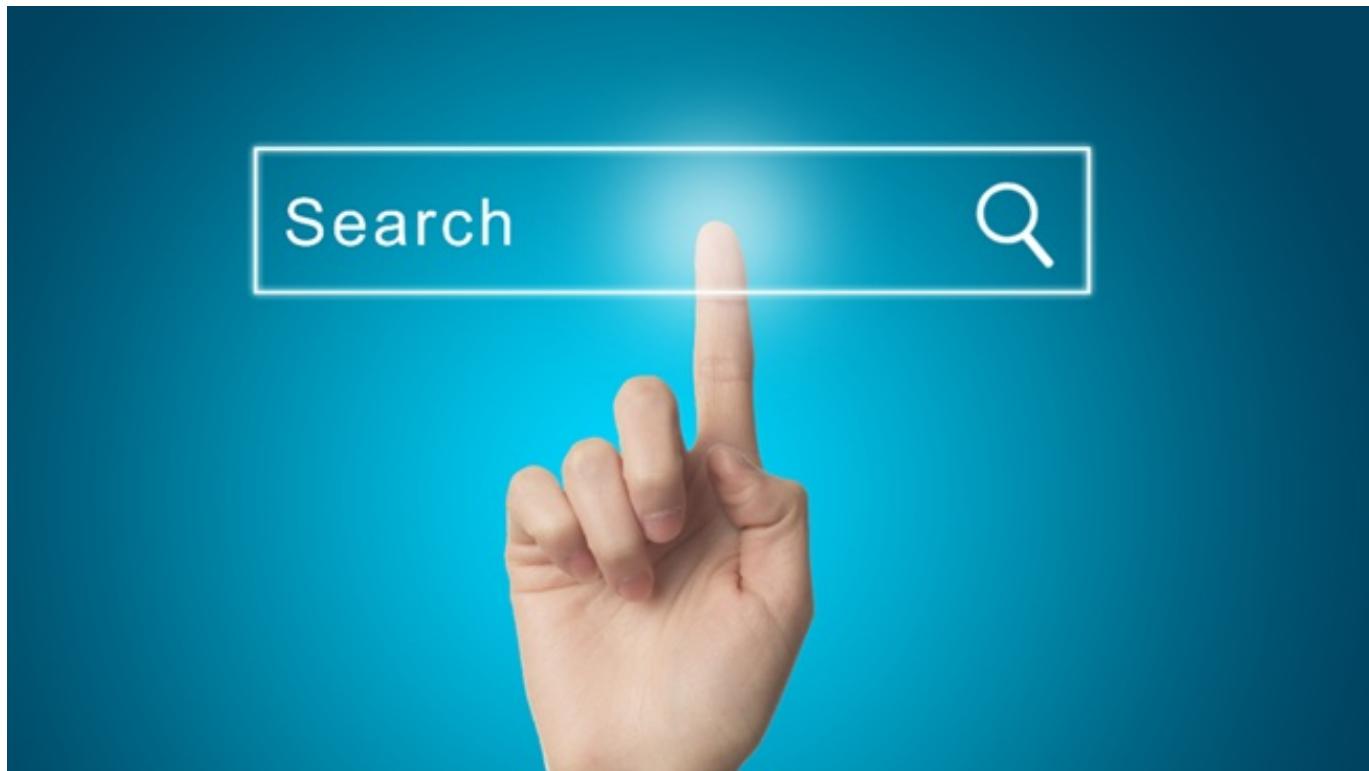
It happens that, according to a report by Semrush – a platform that helps with digital presence and content marketing, optimizing visibility – the publications that work best in organic searches tend to be the longest ones. The reasons are that they improve search positions because search engines, and excuse the redundancy, favor content that is rich in keywords included in a strategic way - and the length of the text encourages this - that uses subtitles, is original, is supported by argumentation and contextualization, as well as those that include internal and external references (links).

"The content that works best has quality, authority and unique thematic angles..." says Semrush.

These and other requirements such as avoiding plagiarism at all costs, even if it's just a couple of sentences, also favor very important organic traffic, which not only benefits the positioning of the journalistic text, but also the site or platform where it's published, while increasing participation in social networks.

The inclusion of images and videos also contributes to this positioning, in addition to helping reading comprehension. Articles that get more external links have, on average, more than seven images, and those that include at least one video generate 70% more organic traffic than those that do not. Obviously, this is made easier if the texts are not short.

Naturally, the issue is not "writing for writing's sake" because, ultimately, the positioning of a text, in this case journalistic, is conditioned by the reader's search intentions. And this is linked to the characteristics of the public to which it's directed and the complexity of the subject addressed.

Thin content is left behind

It's a shame to use the term in English, but talking about "thin content" does not exactly fit the term being referred to, while the English name is the one already coined and could be more easily identified by those who relate to these subjects.

Thin content is classified as "low quality content that offers little or no value to users." They are distinguished by their lack of depth, since they don't offer valuable or relevant information, and if they contain grammatical or writing errors, it's even worse. Search engines barely take these contents into account.

Google's algorithms - the most widely used search engine in the world - are designed to evaluate and prioritize content that is relevant, substantive and valuable.

Thus, poor content, which is just a few statements, is sometimes subject to penalties and to being discarded.

In addition, AI generally needs to feed its databases with high-quality content. In the case of Cuba, it would be very useful to continue providing these reservoirs with information, data, and equally valuable considerations that contribute to forming an increasingly complete and accurate vision of Cuban reality and, very importantly, above all, from Cuba.

Although it has been said above that Internet users like to read short texts; paradoxically, many studies have shown that this thin content should not only be taken into account for search engine optimization, but also tends to generate negative responses from users who do not find the information they are looking for.
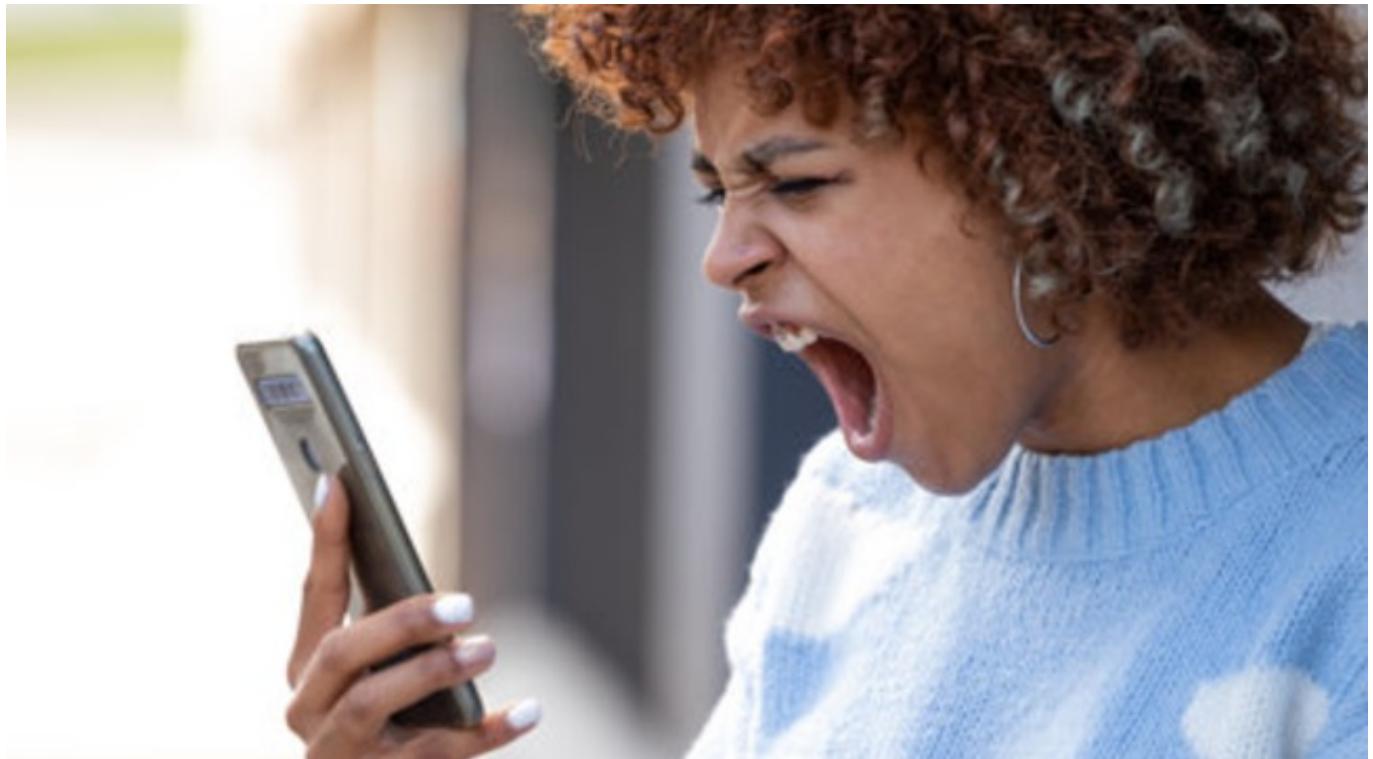
Ultimately, when it comes to long or short texts, one cannot be conclusive. The length of a work is appropriate if it satisfies the Internet user's search intention, his or her interests. And this reader sometimes needs a concise

response; and other times, he or she requires abundant and well-argued information.

Ultimately, the needs of readers are the main compass. Therefore, the first thing is to know who you are writing for, their urgencies, their anxieties and joys, their expectations and uncertainties. That is also the best way to respect them and respect yourself.

Translated by Amilkal Labañino / CubaSí Translation Staff