

The background features a complex geometric pattern of intersecting lines in black, white, light blue, and pink. Several solid black circles are placed at various points where the lines intersect. There are also several white and pink rectangular shapes with pointed ends, resembling speech bubbles or callouts, scattered across the design.

# How Young People Consume News and The Implications For Mainstream Media

A report by Flamingo commissioned  
by the Reuters Institute for the Study  
of Journalism, Oxford University

Flamingo



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## 1 Foreword

### Nic Newman, Senior Research Associate, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism

Mainstream news media has an age problem. Every year, the Reuters Institute *Digital News Report* documents how fewer young people are using traditional sources of news such as television, radio and print, and how they are getting more of their news from social media and other aggregators.

These trends have underlined the challenge for mainstream media in attracting the attention of younger audiences, in building the brand loyalty and news habits that ultimately will guarantee their future. In short, news organisations are struggling to remain relevant to a generation that has grown up with the distractions and diversions of digital media.

Against that background, we were keen to commission a report that could both explore these challenges but also come up with constructive and realistic suggestions about how to tackle them.

This research sets out to answer two key questions:

- **How do young people consume news?**
- **How can news publishers attract young readers, listeners and viewers?**

A number of secondary questions were also investigated, such as the relevance of the traditional news agenda, the type of formats that appeal to younger audiences, as well as tone of voice and perceptions of negativity in the news.

In commissioning this report from strategic insight consultancy Flamingo, we engaged a team with a long track record of researching the attitudes and behaviours of younger audiences and turning this into actionable insights. The methodologies chosen, which include tracking the digital footprints of 20 respondents along with diaries and interviews, have helped to uncover some of the core needs of younger groups around news, as well as some of the frustrations with the approaches taken by mainstream media.

This qualitative work has helped complement the data from our annual Digital News Report and given all of us a much richer understanding of the differences between younger and older news consumers. At the same time, we hope that the insights contained in this report will be useful for industry, for regulators, policy makers, and others interested in the future of quality journalism.

We are very grateful to the Flamingo team both in responding to our brief so creatively, but also for meeting our demanding timeline. This report was greatly strengthened by the input of the Institute's research team, especially Antonis Kalogeropoulos, who helped shape the focus of the research and provided feedback through the process.

This report is made possible by the support of our sponsors and published with the support of the Google News Initiative.

## 2 Executive Summary

Younger audiences are different from older groups not just in what they do, but in their core attitudes in terms of what they want from the news. Young people are primarily driven by progress and enjoyment in their lives, and this translates into what they look for in news.

They still need and want news to connect their world to the world – and fulfil an array of different social and personal needs – but they don't necessarily see the traditional media as the best or only way to do that. News media is now competing for attention with myriad other distractions, and there is a high level of 'background' or 'indirect' exposure to news (through social media, other online conversations, documentaries and TV shows, etc.). They don't need to seek it out, news comes to them. Finally, much of the excitement and gravitas for younger people is on the periphery of the news space (infotainment, lifestyle, cultural, grassroots, bloggers and vloggers).

All this means there is a **disconnect; traditional news media no longer seems as relevant or as dominant when it comes to news content**. In a simplified way, how news brands and young people view the role and value of news is different:

- Traditional news brands see news as: what you **should** know.
- Young audiences see news as: what you should know (to an extent), but also what is **useful** to know, what is **interesting** to know, and what is **fun** to know.

And the role of news for young people appears primarily individualistic; **it's about what it can do for them as individuals – rather than for society as a whole**. While it's true that the industry is moving towards producing more content of this kind, most traditional news brands are still not associated with being useful, interesting or fun.

The study also revealed that the differences in the relationships young people have with the news depend on three key areas: the **moment**, the **person** and the **medium**. Four key news moments (dedicated, updated, time-filler, and intercepted) are described in detail, as are four types of news consumer (Heritage News Consumers, Dedicated News Devotees, Passive News Absorbers, and Proactive News Lovers). The impact of the various media is also investigated, revealing key roles, usage, pros and cons of platforms including Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Reddit and podcasts.

Lastly, exploring areas of interest for the industry revealed a number of attitudes towards the news, including an overarching finding that **consuming news can often feel like a chore**.

Even if the media adopts the suggestions outlined in this report, there is no guarantee of success. Our segmentation work suggests that a significant proportion of young people in the US and UK will be hard to engage given their low interest in news. Building brand loyalty with these more 'passive' groups will be tough, though it is possible that they will become more engaged as they take on greater responsibility and enter a different life-stage. But other groups like the News Devotees and Heritage Consumers, and to an extent the Proactive News Lovers, offer more opportunities to build dedicated and direct moments for news as well as an ongoing connection throughout the day.

Achieving this will require a relentless focus on the needs of younger audiences but also a deep understanding of the motivations that underpin behaviour. We hope this report will contribute to this process.

Based on all of the insight gathered, the report offers a number of provocations around potential payment models, and a detailed guide to producing content to engage younger audiences. It arrives at three key conclusions:

1

**The experience of news should feel as easy and accessible as Facebook and Netflix. This is partly about how the content is presented, but also about how it is surfaced.**

2

**News brands need to tell stories in ways that fit the expectations of young people and the moments when they are open to news. This means creating formats that are native to mobile and social platforms as well as incorporating these ideas into their own websites.**

3

**The way the news media covers stories may need to change, including addressing issues such as negativity, stereotypes, diversity and how news brands present both themselves and their content on third party platforms.**

## 3 Background & Objectives

Broadcasters and newspapers are struggling to reach or build relationships with under-35s. This is an age group that tends to access the news via social media, aggregators and other non-traditional media.

This challenge has not gone unnoticed or unresearched. Previous studies highlight the role that family background, socioeconomic status and parents' news consumption habits all play in forming an individual's news engagement<sup>1</sup>. However, with the emergence of a digital native generation in Gen Z, an established high-choice news environment and greater exposure to different attitudes, things might be changing.

Recent editions of the Digital News Report (2018 and 2019) show that there has been a slowing and even reversing of the rise in the use of social media for news access in some key markets. Companies are also beginning to focus more on quality and payment. Within this context, phenomena like the increasing awareness of hate speech and the spread of fake news or 'malinformation'<sup>2</sup> means audiences are placing greater importance on the value and quality of content - an emerging trend uncovered in a recent Flamingo and Synthesis study investigating fake news in Kenya and Nigeria for the BBC<sup>3</sup>.

### The objectives

This study set out to answer two key questions:

- How do young people consume news?
- How can news publishers attract young readers, listeners and viewers?

In this context, there were three key elements of news to consider: the agenda or content (the chosen topics), the format, and the tone of news. Alongside this framework of analysis there were key differences to consider, such as between platforms (e.g. Facebook and Instagram), between media, between age groups, and between different payment methods.

There were also a number of hypotheses to investigate, such as the impact an individual's level of interest in the news has on their consumption.

Finally, there were areas of interest from the industry conversation that it was vital to explore among younger audiences:

- The relevance of the news agenda for younger audiences
- Negativity and the news
- The state of opinions in the news
- The tone of news feeling misaligned with younger people
- The news not effectively using new formats, such as social media
- The state of trust in the news
- The feeling that there is an overwhelming amount of news

With so many different aspects to the initial research questions, there was a clear need to have a way of staying locked on the overall objective. To do this, Flamingo devised a 'goal-led lens' for the many questions to explore. In order to dig deep into how news publishers and broadcasters can build longstanding relationships with younger audiences, it was necessary to explore and understand this audiences' life goals, values and ambitions in relation to news.

### The goal-led lens

As social media and aggregators have grown to dominate the news experience of this audience, the reference point for the 'source' of a story has become distorted. News brands have grown more and more concerned about 'attribution' – that is, how to ensure that content is properly attributed to the brand or author that created it in a multi-platform, fragmented, global news environment.

This year's Digital News Report shows that concern about misinformation remains extremely high around the world, partly driven by very low trust in the news found in social media. A significant proportion of consumers – especially younger ones – say they have started to rely more on 'reputable sources' in the last year<sup>4</sup>. One possible implication of this is that young people have gradually become more aware of the true source of content and the value of quality journalism<sup>5</sup>.

Despite this, digital news accessed through social media and similar platforms continues to dominate. But the extent to which young people truly value the news they access there is up for debate. Other work has indicated that young people often don't truly value the news they find on social media, which suggests that their behaviour and habits don't always align with their goals and ambitions (not surprising when we think of other areas of human habit misaligning ambition, such as diet or exercise).

This work therefore set out to explore and understand the audiences' goals and ambitions in relation to news, while crucially keeping in mind that the momentum described above is only one part of the story.





### 3 Methodology

Getting to this insight using qualitative research presented a number of challenges. Given the cultural cachet tied up with news consumption, it was predicted that people wouldn't always be completely honest about their news behaviours and habits. Moreover, habits often become so ingrained that people aren't even aware of them, or can't remember them. Lastly, the average person would find it difficult to articulate what can practically be done by a news publisher (format, tone, content) to improve their offer.

A multi-faceted approach was needed to get beneath all the complex but interrelated aspects at play. The methodology used enabled full understanding of the news habits and values of the audience in relation to format, content and tone from three points of view: (i) what people don't tell us, (ii) what people do tell us, and (iii) what people can't tell us about their behaviours and motivations.

	Digital Tracking 2 weeks	Digital Diaries 3 days	In-home Interviews 90 mins	Friendship Trios 60 mins	Semiotic Analysis <sup>6</sup>
	<b>(i) What people don't tell us</b>		<b>(ii) What people do tell us</b>		<b>(iii) What people can't tell us</b>
	<p>For 2 weeks, the smartphone behaviour of 20 individuals, split across the UK and US, was tracked (with the informed and direct consent of each individual taking part).</p> <p>Data on their digital and online habits, routines, web activity, app time and social media usage was gathered and analysed.</p>	<p>16 of these individuals then completed digital diaries. Using an online app, they captured information about the news they consumed offline, on laptops, tablets and phones as it happened, over the course of 3 days.</p> <p>They also did a short deprivation or saturation task: based on key news brands from their tracking, people either spent a day without, or only with, that brand.</p>	<p>Using all this data, profiles and personalised discussion guides were created for each individual.</p> <p>The 16 participants were interviewed about their wider goals, what they value in news, the motivations behind their behaviours and their perception of the news.</p>	<p>8 of those 16 individuals were joined by 2 friends after the interview.</p> <p>This allowed for exploration – in a real group setting – of the more social side of news and sharing, alongside responses to different, more innovative formats, tones and content.</p>	<p>Finally, news content – including that taken directly from the tracking data – was analysed semiotically to ascertain what is at play within different formats, content and tones in a way that people sometimes struggle to articulate.</p>
<p>Flamingo spoke to individuals in the UK and the USA – market leaders for digital news media and key countries of interest for the Reuters Institute and many of its partners.</p> <p>To capture age and generational differences, the sample was broken down into four age brackets that roughly align with Generation Y (Millennials) and Generation Z.</p>	<b>Age brackets</b>		<b>Gen Z</b>	<b>Gen Y</b>	
			18-20	25-30	
			21-24	31-35	





*I enjoy it being intertwined with social media. I don't have to actively think: 'Oh, let me check up on my friends and let me check up on my news.' I can do both at the same time...Also I think it's just more interesting to see the news in the context of my friends' lives, and just see who is sharing what posts, and why it's relevant to them.*

**Maggie, 21-24, US**



## 4 The Role Of News For Young Audiences

This study was about audience understanding, but with a specific focus on particular behaviours. It was necessary to understand, at least at a top level, who these people are and what they are seeking from life before it would be possible to analyse the role news plays for them. Habits, after all, are at least initially formed in order to achieve some reward, or goal, even if we then lose touch with that original reward later down the line<sup>7</sup>.

The goals and aspirations of the people involved in the study were universal and somewhat basic. They included: saving money, buying a house, family, friends, creativity, kindness, caring, being fulfilled and having new experiences.

But when taken from the point of view of motivations and values in news and media more generally, two key themes cut across all the goals and aspirations. Each theme, in turn, has implications for the role of news. They play across much of the more granular understanding of how these audiences engage with and consume the news and help to explain some of the changes observed.

The first theme is **progress**: goals, values and ambitions here can be seen as personal development and, to an extent, personal improvement through the eyes of the individual.

The basic ideas that sit behind it include:

- I want to develop myself personally
- I have goals I want to reach in my personal life and my work life
- I want to escape the limits of societal expectations or stereotypes
- I want to look after myself too

The second theme is **enjoyment**, though it could just have easily been called ‘fun’: the expectation is that in a world of abundance and ease of access to things, this audience also wants to enjoy what they do.

The basic ideas that sit behind it include:

- I want to enjoy my life
- I want to have fun experiences
- I want to be entertained
- I want to do what I love

In his podcast, *Philosophize This!*<sup>8</sup>, Stephen West captures both themes in his introduction to each episode, when he says: “Thank you for wanting to know more today than you did yesterday, and I hope you love the show.”

### Key generational differences: digital natives vs. digital migrants

The onslaught of articles, reports and publications proclaiming noticeable differences in attitude, values and behaviours between Gen Z and Millennials suggests this could impact on what constitutes ‘valuable’ or ‘engaging’ media.

For the purpose of this research, the key generational difference is that while some Millennials grew up with some level of internet, the vast majority also intimately know the world without social media or even email. In this sense, they are ‘digital migrants’. Gen Z, however, have only ever really known the digital world and are, thus, the first generation of true ‘digital natives’<sup>9</sup>.

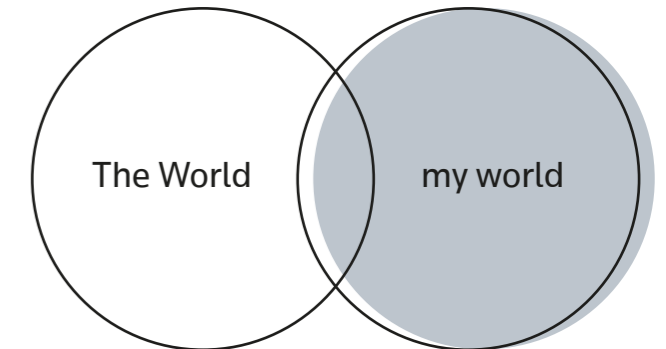
With this in mind, there were slight generational differences that are interesting and helpful to keep in mind, although they do not significantly impact the bigger overall themes of progress and enjoyment.

- Gen Z, as digital natives, have even higher expectations of a flawless, seamless, personalised online experience than Millennials. Convenience and instant gratification are hygiene factors. This isn’t to say Millennials don’t appreciate and value seamlessness but – having known a time before even a slow online world existed – perhaps they can be more forgiving.
- Gen Z appear to be a more transactional group than the experience-centric Millennials. We know DIY and collaboration culture is strong<sup>10</sup>, but this also means they are resourceful and pragmatic; visibly considering what they can get out of the different relationships and activities they adopt. The personal utility of news is therefore seen in a particularly practical sense; ‘how does it benefit me?’. Driven by a more intuitive love for experience, we found discovery and learning came across stronger among the 25-35s.
- Finally, perhaps due to their native and proactive approach online, for Gen Z, control over and curation of their online environment is ever more important<sup>11</sup>.

And while it’s possible that with age, work and responsibility this will evolve, formative attitudes toward progress, enjoyment and digital technology will continue to impact these generations’ outlook and expectations.

### What does this mean for the role of news?

The core role of news, of allowing you to know what is going on in the world, meets a fundamental human need: to connect people’s individual world with the wider world.



In this sense, it provides a basis to the social side of humanity, playing an important role in communication and cooperation in a world where increasingly large populations live and work together. Beyond this, engagement with the news is driven by a broader range of needs and roles that it can fulfill in our lives.

This research identified six core needs behind young people’s engagement with the news. Reflecting the key themes in the younger audience’s goals and ambitions, some news needs pull more towards progress, others toward enjoyment and fun.

Progress		
1. Status	2. Identity	3. Learning
Enjoyment		
4. Connections	5. Entertainment	6. Passions

News plays to a number of progress-related needs, focused both on the self as well as our position in society:

## Progress

### 1. Status

In different contexts news relates to a social standing. Knowledge is valued. Being 'in the know' gives you gravitas and allows you to feel confident.

**Ed, 25-30, UK**

To feel knowledgeable about different topics is one [motivation].

### 2. Identity

News helps you construct and communicate your identity. The news you engage with contributes to defining and demonstrating who you are, and your world view.

**Sam, 25-30, US**

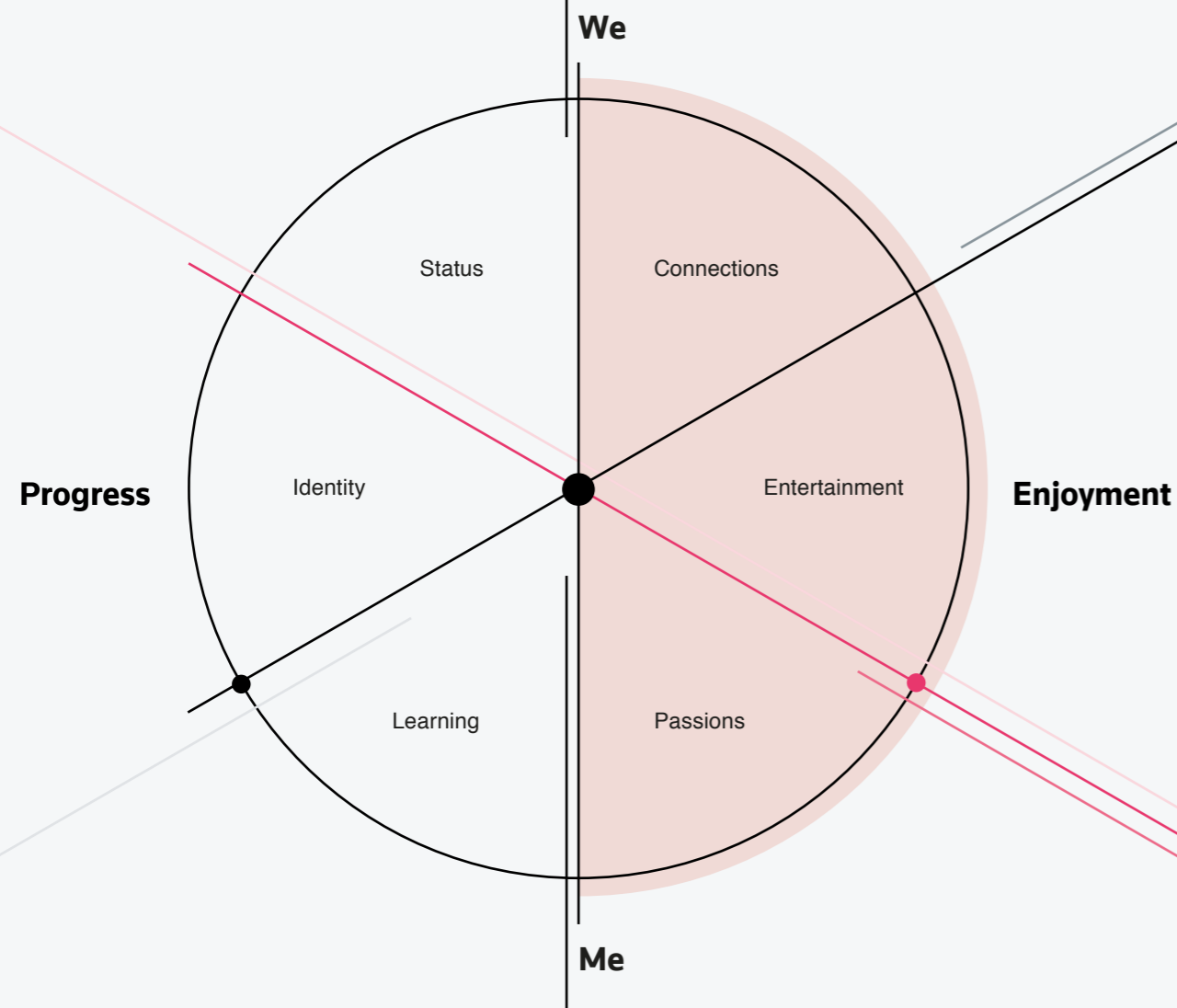
I think it's part of my identity, quite honestly. I have friends who are very obsessed with sports, for example, and I quite frankly couldn't give a shit about sports. Keeping up with that is part of their identity. It's who they are. For me, it's the ability to intelligently talk about Brexit, for example.

### 3. Learning

News meets our desire to better ourselves through learning, to explore and broaden our horizons. It allows us to develop new skills and ways of seeing the world, as well as to make savvier decisions and stay ahead of the curve.

**Amy, 25-30, UK**

I see hard news as my daily source of knowledge on the commute to work in the morning. I see the lifestyle news aspect that really helps me with my own personal development, my interests, hobbies and basically giving me knowledge and awareness.



But news also plays to needs related to enjoyment, which can be just as inwardly focused as outwardly or socially focused:

## Enjoyment

### 4. Connections

News is the ultimate source of small (and sometimes 'big') talk that helps lubricate daily conversations. It allows you to confidently reach out and connect with those who are unlike you or have little in common, as well as discuss with friends and family. It delivers a wider sense of connection to the world at large.

**Michelle, 31-35, US**

Sometimes people are talking about it, like, 'Oh yes, I read that today,' but I don't know, I guess it's a habit for me. That's probably why it started, just to have a general knowledge of what's going on in the world, to feel like you're part of the world, or you know what's going on.

### 5. Entertainment

News, like media more widely, can be fun. Being immersed in other worlds for pleasure, feeling inspired, enjoying creativity, or simply – but no less importantly – just passing the time.

**Courtney, 21-24, US**

It's all entertainment at this point. It's not about being kept up-to-date with what's going on in the world, it's about, 'This will keep me occupied,' that sort of thing.

### 6. Passions

News also helps us fuel and pursue our passions and interests, or to experience things we wouldn't usually in daily life.

**Alex, 31-35, UK**

But it is primarily probably an entertainment tool. Like it is probably a thing to fill that kind of interest as well. In terms of entertainment news, I actually look on the Empire magazine website because they have daily film news, and things like that.



## Greater role of news isn't translating into greater relevance for traditional news brands

The role of news – in its widest possible sense (i.e. knowing about what's going on in The World) – in young people's lives seems much greater than expected and at times felt even more pronounced than with past generations. As we've seen, the main role of connecting 'my world' and 'The World' hasn't gone anywhere, and the news continues to meet a vast array of different needs.

On top of this, in today's digital world we have greater access to more news sources, in more ways, more of the time. The world is increasingly globalised, which can bring local stories from one continent to another in an instant. And there is a greater breadth of what constitutes news, given the explosion of social media, digital start-ups, blogs and influencers.

There also seem to be ever more reasons to engage with news. For a number of reasons, whether political, social or due to ease of access and the constant conversation online, it came across that there is greater pressure for everyone to be informed and to have a point of view on everything. Perhaps there is therefore even greater utility of news in this broader sense of the term.

But while there seems to be just as great a role for news as ever for this audience, this doesn't translate into greater relevance for traditional news publishers and broadcasters.

In fact, it feels quite the opposite. As we know, there is intense competition for media, which is redefining what constitutes news and how it is delivered. In the pervasive attention economy, news media is competing for attention with myriad other distractions. There is also a great level of 'background' or 'indirect' exposure to news (through social media, other online conversations, documentaries and TV shows, etc.), which means that while news still plays a role, there is less motivation to seek it out in its traditional spaces.

Finally, much of the excitement and gravitas for younger people is on the periphery of the news space (infotainment, lifestyle, cultural, grassroots, bloggers and vloggers). These are not traditional news brands' areas of strength.

## Bridging the disconnect

This apparent disconnect is possibly due to what each group considers to be the key role and value of the news. A simplified way of looking at this would be:

- Traditional news brands see it as: what you **should** know.
- Young audiences see it as: what you **should** know (to an extent), but also what is **useful** to know, what is **interesting** to know, and what is **fun** to know.

The role of news for young people appears primarily individualistic; it's about what it can do for them as individuals – rather than for society as a whole. And while it's true that the industry is moving toward producing more content of this kind, most traditional news brands are still not associated with being useful, interesting or fun.

For this reason, a key way to increase relevance among under-35s is to think about what they personally want and value from the news, and how news brands can best go about delivering this.

Bearing in mind the key themes of progress and entertainment, there are three ways to drive news brands in the right direction:

### 1. Personal Utility: news that...

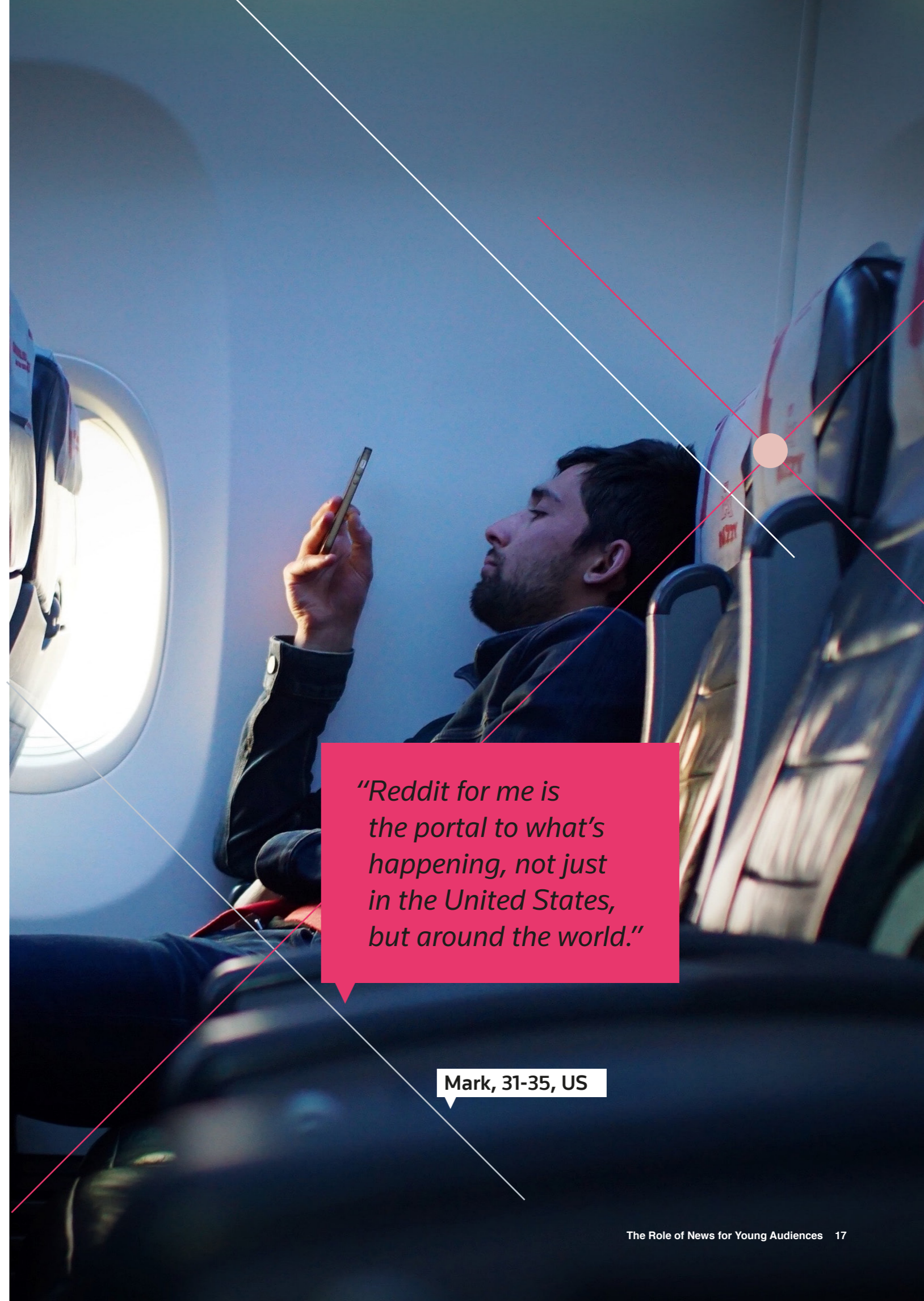
- Is useful in my life
- Helps my personal development
- Contributes to my status & identity
- Can act as social glue

### 2. Entertainment: news that...

- Is enjoyable and engaging to consume
- Has high entertainment value
- Has fun content and delivery

### 3. Point of View: news that...

- Has a point of view or an angle on a story
- Is clearly informed by facts (rather than prejudice or agenda)
- Helps me develop my own point of view
- Is different to predictable / politicised / extreme opinion and ideology



*"Reddit for me is the portal to what's happening, not just in the United States, but around the world."*

Mark, 31-35, US



# 5 News Habits & Behaviours

Driving relevance of traditional news brands is not as simple as delivering an entertaining point of view that offers personal utility. Just as there are differences in formats, tone and content, there are differences in what is valued from the news depending on the moment, the medium and the individual. By understanding and successfully navigating these three variables, news providers will be much better placed to repeatedly generate resonant content that can build engagement with under-35s.

## Differences across news moments

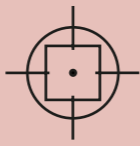



First, and perhaps the most often overlooked, is the impact of the news moment on what a person is looking for in the news. Different routines, different work lives and environments meant many types of news occasions were observed throughout the study.

While a classic news moment might be seen as setting time aside to read the paper or watch the 10 o'clock News, unsurprisingly the news moments for this audience are not as one-dimensional. They range from the more often direct and targeted to a news brand, to the more indirect and incidental.

Across the different sources of data, four key news moments – with accompanying mindsets – were observed.

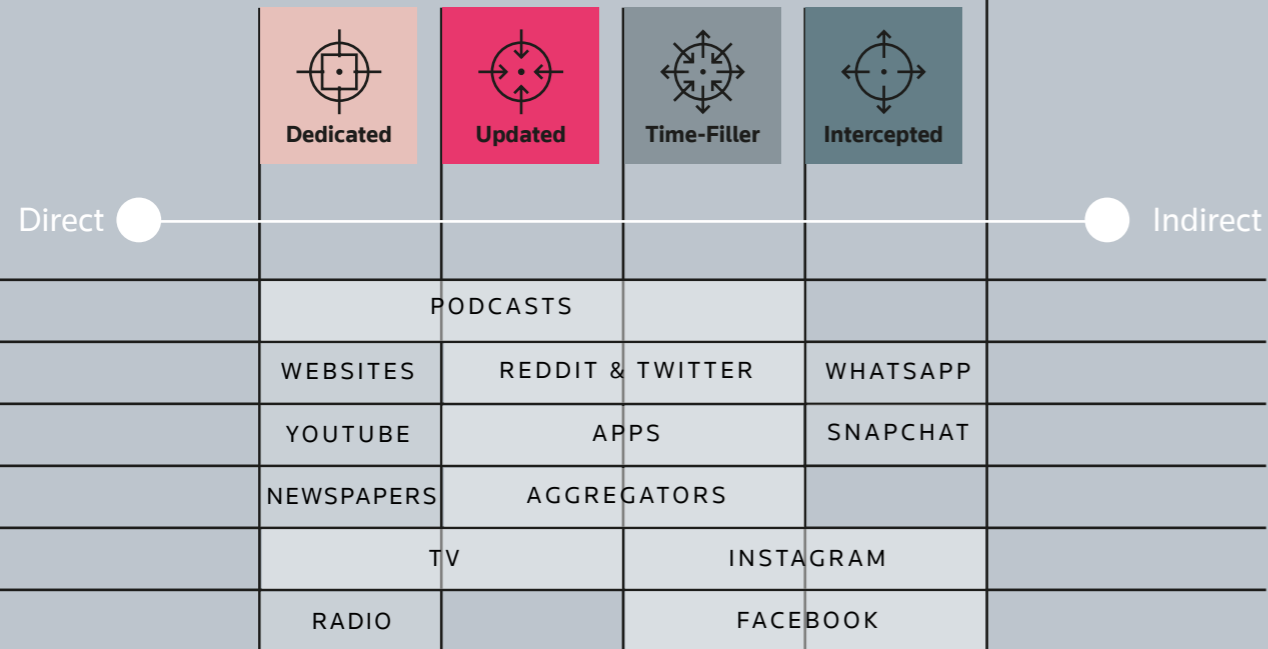
These different moments were evident in both markets. Different formats, tones and content will better suit the mindset, value and focus in each moment. For example, an entertaining investigatory long read suits a 'Dedicated' moment, while a short visual summary of the day's news suits 'Updated'. An interesting short video is a good 'Time-filler', while a talking point headline grounded in shared experiences suits an 'Intercepted' moment.

As well as influencing the type of news item that an individual might be looking to engage with, these moments are also interrelated with where and how the consumer is accessing the news (directly with a brand, or indirectly through a third party) and therefore the medium (newspaper, social media, news app etc.).

	 <b>Dedicated</b>	 <b>Updated</b>	 <b>Time-Filler</b>	 <b>Intercepted</b>
	Direct ●			● Indirect
	"A fascinating new story about..."	"What's going on in the world today?"	"Checking in to see what's up"	"Check this out!"
	This moment is about dedicating time to the news, as you might a novel or TV series	This is about getting the key news updates you need/ want in an efficient way	Not about the news per se; something to do or to amuse, often while doing something else on a third party platform or in the real world. <small>*Perhaps the most common for this audience but also the most competitive</small>	A notification or message intercepts what was otherwise happening (working, watching TV etc.) either on social media, an aggregator or news app
	Less common; suits evenings or weekends	Often suits mornings; preparing for the day	Constant throughout the day: on the train, in the bathroom, or taking a break etc. Whenever there is time to fill	Can happen anytime and anywhere as long as with their phone
	<b>Mindset:</b> more introspective; deepening and developing understanding	<b>Mindset:</b> more something I feel I need to do; deliberately getting in the know on what's going on in the world	<b>Mindset:</b> more something I do to distract / amuse; less proactive news consumption	<b>Mindset:</b> passive recipient
	<b>Value:</b> news that 'shows' me, helps me develop or keeps me entertained, provides depth	<b>Value:</b> news that 'tells' me quickly and easily	<b>Value:</b> pockets of news that seamlessly suit my ever-changing and divided attention	<b>Value:</b> news that has collective or personal resonance among my peers or wider society
	<b>Focus:</b> quality analysis, nuanced or developed POV, strong narrative, engaging	<b>Focus:</b> time saving, information briefings and summaries of what is happening	<b>Focus:</b> entertainment, curiosity, timeliness, seamless, platform fit, fluid consumption	<b>Focus:</b> less easy as depends on collective resonance but is a key opportunity for brand exposure to new audiences
	Anna, 21-24, UK	Sam, 25-30, US	Maggie, 21-24, US	Joe, 18-20, UK
	I suppose my favourite way of consuming news is my weekend treat of buying the Guardian in print every now and then.	The [Economist] Espresso is a daily news snippet app... You go through, there's an ad there and then once you cycle through them all you get a world in brief...it covers a lot in a short amount of time.	Eating is, sort of, a rest time to catch up on my phone...So, in the mornings, while I'm eating, sometimes if I'm in line somewhere to get coffee, I'll just take out my phone and look up stuff there. If I'm early to a class, I'll just look on my phone before the class starts.	I'd say we do [share news on WhatsApp] but I think a lot of it would be a news article and then following that, for the next two weeks would be memes and a load of p*ss-takes but depending on the article.

## Media and Platforms: how young audiences are accessing the news

Young people use a plethora of different platforms and media to engage with the news. Each has its own role and relative merit. Together they create a news ecosystem that sits across all four news moments.



Because of this complex media environment, young people are looking for content and platforms that allow them to seamlessly flow through the digital space in an uninterrupted way. As expected, social media therefore dominates people's phones; it is convenient to have all your online entertainment, information and connection in one space.

## Observing digital behaviour underlines the preference for social media over news

News apps take a much more backseat role both in terms of the number of phones they appear on, and the amount of time given to them when they do appear. We have listed the apps and topics in order of average amount of time spent on them. The numbers on each app icon indicate how many phones that app was found on<sup>12</sup>.

Instagram is the primary app found on almost all phones and, when found, commanded the most daily minutes.

No news app (with the exception of Reddit) was within the top 25 apps used by respondents. When present, they represented comparatively small levels of daily usage.

Apps presented are ordered by the average number of minutes per day spent on app (when present on a user phone)

### Usage Categories

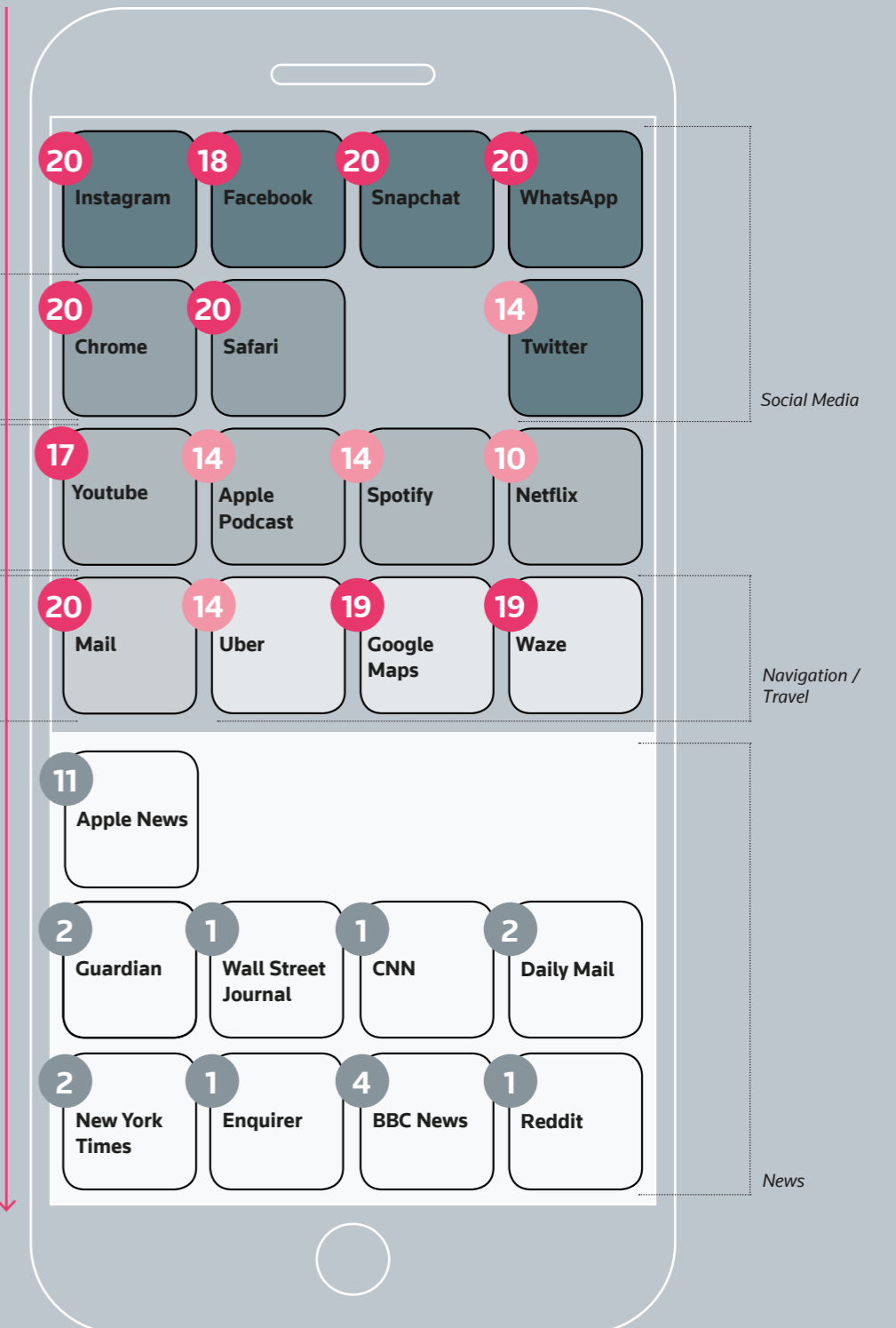
Web Surfing  
Entertainment  
Communication

Social Media

Navigation / Travel

News

Number of separate phones we found this app in



Individual 1

Snapchat 29.43%		Instagram 21.72%	
Twitter 13.21%	Fitbit 9.91%	Kik 5.55%	Google 2.09%
	Yahoo! Mail 7.97%	Safari 3.30%	BBC News <1%

Individual 2<sup>13</sup>

YouTube 27.45%		Safari 14.88%		Netflix 8.14%	
				Facebook 4.41%	
JobSpotter 11.32%		Google Maps 3.66%	Twitter 2.86%		
		IMOB 3.66%	BBC News <1%		
Podcasts 10.30%		dealornodeal 3.47%			

By observing participants' online behaviour in detail, it is possible to see even further into the preference given to social media over news apps. For two of the four individuals who had the BBC news app on their phone during the two-week tracking period; the app represented less than 1% of usage time for both.

It is therefore the key opportunity, if done right. This audience looks for what is quick, easy and convenient. If they are already on social media or podcasts for entertainment and socialising, then it instantly becomes convenient to access news there too.

The research also revealed that while Apple News and other apps are convenient, they still didn't challenge much for time against the top entertainment and communication apps. This indicates that the time-filler moment, which takes place primarily on third party platforms, appears to be the main moment in which news is being consumed by this audience.

Maggie, 21-24, US

**If I wake up and I know I'm going to have a super busy day, it's very possible that I just won't come across any news, or won't actively seek any news. So, I find it as a thing that, sort of like social media, something that I don't need to check up on. I would like to, if I have the time. Which is also why I enjoy it being intertwined with social media. I don't have to actively think: 'Oh, let me check up on my friends and let me check up on my news.' I can do both at the same time by seeing what my friends are posting about the news.**

Amy, 25-30, UK

**I'm online quite a lot. So, I would look at videos most of all, because it's quite quick and easy to digest that way.**

Chloe, 31-35, UK

**It's just the one that comes with my phone [Android News Suite]. You get the notification with this bar here. Sometimes you find yourself on a website that you wouldn't normally like to go on.**

Courtney, 21-24, US

**The first thing I would do [in the morning] would be to check social media, see if there's anything on Facebook.**

Sam, 25-30, US

**I think it's a bit more passive... You're able to multitask. Like, I can cook and listen to a podcast, for example.**

## Social media dominates the platforms, to varying degrees

Now that we have seen how this audience is spending its time online, we can start to pick apart the different platforms and media that they use.

**Social Media** has an almost unrivalled relevance as it allows a less mediated experience. It also offers opportunities to control and curate your own unique news experiences. It offers a range of views from the professional to the layperson and an ability to engage directly with 'the news'. Here, the news often comes integrated into the wider world of entertainment / interests / personal life. This is where its convenience lies.

However, in light of attention around well-being, privacy and so on, young people are reflecting on their use of social media and the role different platforms play:

- Facebook has fallen out of favour and become an organisational tool
- Instagram has replaced it to an extent, but is not a natural place for news
- Twitter / Reddit have assumed a role of news aggregators and personal curators

Ellie, 18-20, UK

**[Facebook is] ancient. Like, a mum's thing. I don't really use it anymore.**

Chloe, 31-35, UK

**I think I used to use Facebook a lot, and over the past five, six years, I basically hardly use it at all now, which is one massive change. In its place, Instagram has come, and I think I use Instagram more than I ever used Facebook.**

Mark, 31-35, US

**Reddit for me is the portal into what's happening, not just in the United States, but around the world. It's easy for me to weed out what I'm not going to be interested in. It's just a really easy way to access the news.**

**Podcasts** sit in a space of their own. Akin to radio for the digital generation, but more personally relevant. The format is directly applicable to news as it allows for in-depth experiences, with a range of tonality and topics rarely found anywhere else.

Podcasts are easy to access and can be listened to anywhere, while doing anything. But they also feel more informal, providing a more authentic voice and giving individuals control and choice over what they engage with. They offer a level of seamless curation that has become expected for social media generations. Personal utility and development in its many manifestations was a common theme in people's podcast libraries.

Chloe, 31-35, UK

**Literally, ease. You have it. You're not actively searching something or reading a screen. You're letting it wash over you. It's also typically more of an outsider source of news or opinion, so you have a diverse range of news ideas and thoughts from vastly different people; not your traditional people who look and act a certain way.**

Mark, 31-35, US

**But radio you can't control what shows are on, whereas podcasts you can.**

**Apps and Aggregators** are useful tools to cut through the chaotic complexity of choice in the saturated news world. They appeal to both those who seek simplicity, and those more engaged who want to curate their news experiences and ensure they access a wide range of sources.

Maggie, 21-24, US

**If I'm somewhere where I don't really have time to read a news story, I do rely on headlines. It's the fact that I have access so that I can look at in two seconds, because I'm not really supposed to be on my phone at work. But I can just pull it out, click one button to get to the Apple News story and the answer is right there for me.**

Alongside all this, more **Traditional News Media** have a role to play. Often new platforms don't entirely replace the old, but instead layer onto them and, at times, crowd them out.

Despite this, traditional formats still have significant relevance, whether it's ingrained habits (TV news), ease of access (free papers, websites), specific occasions (websites for breaking stories or Sunday paper treats), a relaxing break from the phone screen (print, radio) or simply part of the fabric of daily life (radio in car or kitchen).

## Platforms/Media In Detail

Platform/Medium	Role	Usage	Pros	Cons
INSTAGRAM	An easy place to see what my friends, idols, passion areas and the world are doing, free from agendas	Throughout the day, scrolling and sharing, but for some it is not a place for news	Colour, creativity, simplicity, control of content, consumable on platform, people, human stories, closer to real news	Not suited to complex stories, news with depth, for some not a place for hard news
FACEBOOK	An organisational tool and place for old friends or family	Scrolling but less frequently than before, still strong place for news, but engaging carefully and less often here than before	Specific and trusted news brands that can follow, consumable within platform	Fake news, click-bait, news that tries to get users off platform, the worst aspects of the news world today
TWITTER	A place to seamlessly check in with what's going on in the world	Throughout the day whenever there's time or when there's a big development / breaking story	Follow & participate in unfolding of events, closer to real news, people / personalities, short videos / images	Long pieces don't work, content trying to pull reader off platform
REDDIT	A place to seamlessly check in with what's going on in the world, giving the impression of getting to what really matters without being beholden to a single source	Throughout the day whenever there's time, mainly for users into the news / specific topics areas	Conversation and comments, short videos, shareable items, trending and community-endorsed stories	Disrupting the flow of the online experience, always trying to pull user off platform
SNAPCHAT	A place to have fun with friends; for young people	Throughout the day for trivial entertainment	People news, celeb news, human images, lists, simple, easy content	Not for hard news, wordy news, complexity

Platform/Medium	Role	Usage	Pros	Cons
WHATSAPP	A place to chat with friends & family, or coordinate groups	Throughout the day for communication	Intercept moments, shared interests, humour	Click bait or fake news
YOUTUBE	A hub for pastime entertainment or research	When there is some time to explore or watch	Interviews, short documentaries, newsreaders	Large number of short or simplistic videos
PODCASTS	Versatile gateway to every imaginable type of content	Consumed on-the-go (commuting, sports), passively as background (while doing work or chores), or sometimes as a dedicated moment	Unlimited breadth of content (topics, POV, approaches - from amateur to professional, informative to motivational to entertaining, broad to incredibly specific). Audio / downloadable format gives great versatility of usage, conversational tone	Can require a certain level of engagement to appreciate, lack of a clear trigger to get into it
NEWS APPS	Efficient access to the news I want	Often routine (gaps in day), but also as time-filler (mainly for those more into news)	Easy to use, feeling like a timeline or being seamless and intuitive to navigate, short day / week summaries, tailorable variety	Mimicking newspapers, difficult to navigate layouts



	Role	Usage	Pros	Cons
NEWS AGGREGATORS	Efficient access to a breadth of news	(1) Active users to curate and access the news they are most interested in from the sources they want;  (2) Passive users as a way to effortlessly be served an overview of news / check headlines	Option to fully tailor news 'pipeline' OR completely effortless overview	Diversity can narrow with usage (for active users), for passive – too much news
NEWS WEBSITE	The (generally unrestricted) repository of the full story	Can be used as an alternative to apps, to take dedicated time to read news, to skim the homepage for an update, or in an intercept moment when a link is shared	All there in one spot, variety of formats, long-form articles, short summaries of the day, images, explainers and expanders, videos at the top of articles for being shared on social media	Brand led walled garden, formats that should be on social media, website UX or adverts that disrupt seamless online experience, laptop / PC experience often interrupted by other media / social media
NEWSPAPER	A treat to focus on and a break from the screen	Requires dedicated time or can fill the time with free papers	Quality journalism or a grazing online newsfeed feel	Format not convenient for all, not easy to access, nor for all news moments
RADIO	Something on in the background, comforting	While doing other things or through music stations' news updates	Chatty, real people, POV, quick summaries on music stations	Limited control / choice, unlike podcasts
TV	Something on in the background or a catch up	Irregular, often driven by parents' habits or environment	Clear, concise summaries, interviews and real footage from the ground	Narrow agendas and lack of diversity

## Forming News Habits & Behaviours

News habits and behaviours are often the result of past, present and future influences.

### Past

What I grew up with: as with previous research<sup>14</sup>, we found that what people grew up with had an influence over their news consumption. This is not only their socioeconomic background, but also what brands their parents used and what news habits they or their wider family had (both reactionary and confirmatory).

James, 25-30, US

Probably [watch Fox] more because my parents watched it.

Anna, 21-24, UK

We always got a newspaper at the weekend. I lived in a tiny little village and there was, like, a farmer that dropped off the newspapers to everyone's house but, again, it was The Guardian. So, I always, always read The Guardian, then, and now I read The Guardian now.

### Present

Who I am now: there are many possible influences here but predominantly we found that people's social circle and their career had a major impact, both reactionary and confirmatory. Many people cite their job as a reason for engaging with certain news areas or sources. People's current but malleable interests, passions and worldview also have a role to play.

Clive, 25-30, UK

When I go to work and things are being discussed, you don't want to not be informed.

### Future

Who I want to become: people's careers had a major role to play here too, not just what they need to know now, but what they need to demonstrate they know in order to progress in the direction they are aiming for. A sense of general life aspiration, career or not, also had a role here, as did people's desired identity or passion area to improve on.

Luke, 21-24, UK

On the one hand, I have to read the news. It's kind of essential, because I'm going through job applications, for full-time jobs in finance, and it's so important to be up-to-date with news.

All of this resulted in substantial variance among the qualitative sample, within which it was necessary to find common themes and drivers.

## The habits and behaviours of four different types of news consumer

Through combined analysis of the tracking, digital diaries and ethnographic conversations, numerous news routines (or lack of) and behaviours started to emerge that corresponded with similar attitudes. This translated to four fundamental types of news consumer that can be mapped across two axes. **This is not about scale or statistical significance for an audience set, but about exploring the richness of real world behaviours to get a sense of directionality, focus and understanding.**

The two variables that form the mapping are: the extent to which news brands form the epicentre of the individual's news experience (self-led to brand-led) and the level of engagement an individual has with news items in general (low consumption to high consumption).

### News experience

**Brand-led News-world:** here, news brands are seen as the gatekeepers of news. They are accessed to receive information directly, deliberately sought out on third party platforms, and are the instinctive point of reference on a news story.

**Self-led News-world:** the user sees themselves as the gatekeeper of their news by engaging with what they deem relevant to them at that moment. Curated social apps or aggregators generate updates from myriad sources that the user then (or at least perceives to) interprets, navigates and selects what to engage with.

### Level of engagement

**Low Consumption:** Low levels of engagement with news items. Minimal or non-existent content engagement on recorded devices.

**High Consumption:** High levels of engagement with news items. Regular and strong engagement with news content.

These two axes provide a way of interpreting the news habits & behaviours of the individuals we spoke to. Combining this with the learnings from conversations enabled us to pull out four types of news users<sup>15</sup>. While they unavoidably overlap – since they exist along a spectrum and are based on in-depth human qualitative data – they prove useful in taking understanding of under-35s beyond being seen as just one type of news user with one set of motivations and attitudes to the news. This therefore provides further detail and colour on how to better target this audience. It even has the potential to impact what engagement means or looks like for different people.



# The Heritage News Consumer

Just like their parents and siblings, these users make a concerted effort to at least consume some of the same traditional news brands that they grew up seeing. However, making time for these in their busy lives is not always possible, and sometimes feels like a chore that's part of being an adult. Newer technologies, like podcasts and social media feeds, are desirable as they're kind to their packed schedules.

## Opportunity

Here is the greatest opportunity, as these people already operate in a brand-centred news world, but just consume less news. Think how you can make it easier for them to consume news in their busy routines, often through innovative tech, rather than expecting them to suddenly make time for news. The more rewarding they find their small news 'snacks', the more likely their appetite for a full meal will grow.

Brand-led

# The Dedicated News Devotee

These people have a routine, habitual appointment with their primary news brand, and almost always have a dedicated app that they use regularly, if not a browser. They have time slots during the day designated for news consumption. They supplement this with exposure through social media, and have a number of other brands that they regularly look out for, in case they have relevant content.

## Opportunity

These people often already have a strong relationship with a number of news brands, both primary and tertiary. A key focus will be to maintain that relationship with quality news and a relevant agenda. But they also offer the best opportunity for payment. Think about offering a benefit for payment in line with progress and fun, and consider how you can go beyond established monthly subscriptions.

Brand-led

Low Consumption

High Consumption

# The Passive News Absorber

People in this group are just not interested enough to have any sort of regular relationship with news brands. Instead they remain informed through collective osmosis from their online and offline experiences, but dedicate little to no time to actively engaging with the news. When something piques their interest, they search for it directly and care less about the brand they choose. Due to a lack of proactive use of their feeds, they are the most at risk of falling into an echo-chamber cycle.

## Opportunity

People in this group are just not that interested in relationships with news brands. But they do still feel a need to be informed about what's going on in the world. Find ways to raise the prominence and value of your brand in their media world, with seamlessly absorbable headlines, images or short videos. And, in case they do a sudden bit of research, design content ready for this and have it on research platforms, such as YouTube.

Self-led

# The Proactive News Lover

Tech savvy and social media confident, these consumers take matters into their own hands, curating their feeds and aggregators to satisfy their needs. They are committed to news consumption, and no doubt brand aware, but they assume responsibility for collating their news, rather than delegating it to a brand. News content therefore competes with hobbies and social for attention. They dedicate time for news, but it's often news they have found during the constant grazing on their feeds; consuming content as it appears or at a later time. This gives them an opportunity to have multiple relationships with news brands, where each story competes for clicks in a given moment or earns more dedicated attention.

## Opportunity

There is no need to convince this group of the rewards of news, but consider how brands can offer them more value. Their attitude is that they are the curators, so help them do this. Think about content and formats that seamlessly fit into third party platforms or are easily compared with multiple sources, or that publish news and formats that feel like they are more directly from the source, like Twitter or Instagram personalities.

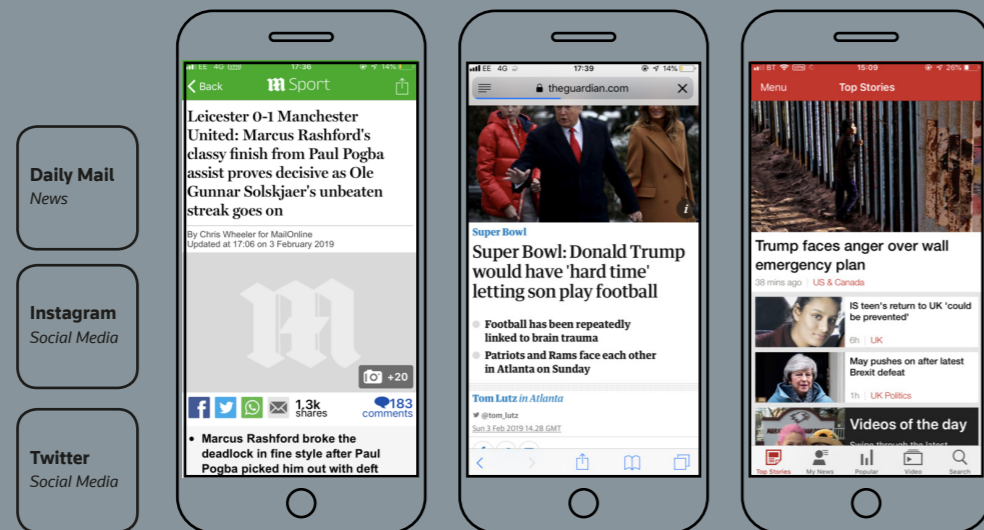
Self-led



# The Dedicated News Devotee

They tend to have clearer news routines than others, though they still consume news throughout the day on periphery and third-party platforms. They suit dedicated and updated news moments but time-filling is always a constant.

- Highest engagement with news brand apps
- Most dedicated to appointment news consumption
- Strong belief in the value of news



## Edward, 21-24, UK

Edward reads The Daily Mail via the app every morning and evening. He also looks up The Guardian online, mainly for sports, but doesn't have The Guardian app. He uses Instagram for entertainment and Twitter for up-to-date news, where he follows both The Guardian and Mail. He also uses The Daily Mail to fill time throughout the day; here it becomes exchangeable with podcasts, Twitter and Instagram. But if he has the time to settle into reading a few articles, he'd rather turn to something like The Guardian or The Sun online if looking for an alternative to The Mail.

The Daily Mail got the most use but he also looked up articles directly on the Guardian, listened to NPR broadcasts (secondary news) and used Twitter as his primary 'time-filler'.

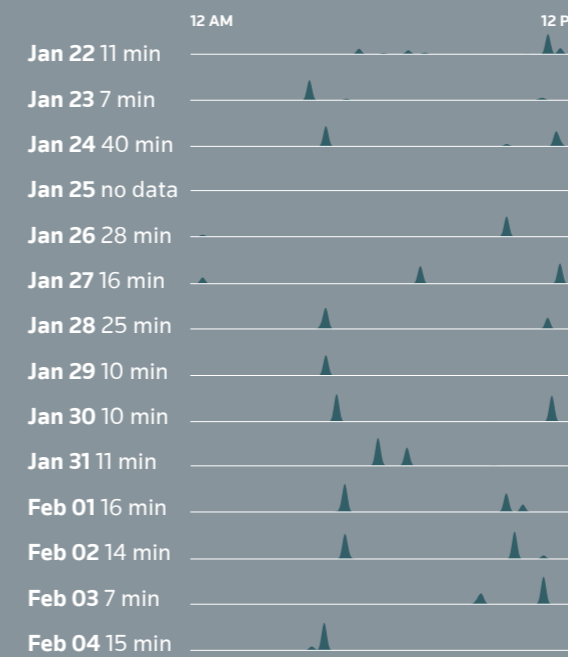
## Sam, 25-30, US

I have a regimen every morning where I get up, shower, brush my teeth and make coffee, and then I sit down, I read Wall Street Breakfast and Seeking Alpha. The Economist has an aggregator called Economist Espresso that gives you five stories and then a world in brief section. I read that, then I listen to NPR Up First... then I go on the train and I read The Economist on the train.

Dedicated	Updated	Time-Filler	Intercepted
<p>This group represents by far the highest levels of this type of moment. They access a primary news brand as a default option, but do explore others.</p> <p>(Less digital evidence for this, as often occurs on computers, tablets or even offline.)</p>	<p>Also, the highest levels for this type of news moment. They have a primary news brand but will explore others.</p>	<p>Major role even for this group; more likely to follow news brands on their feeds and so exposed to more links. Opportunity for wider and curated selection of respected brands.</p>	<p>More likely to share than receive, but there is still evidence that they click through to stories that attract attention or diversify exposure. But brand-led, so if a quality brand comes along, this is a chance to trigger engagement.</p>

## Daily Mail App

Morning and Evening patterns. Routine and appointment. Also regularly read The Guardian.



App activity throughout the day. Height of the peak represents time spent (in 15 minute increments)

My main two are The Mail and The Guardian. We used to get The Mail at home as a newspaper and obviously moving out of home was a bit about, like, still trying to follow that kind of news. Obviously you can, via the app, you can get on a more frequent basis.

Well, I probably get most of my actual news through Twitter. I think I follow BBC News, Sky News, Guardian. I don't think I follow Mail, but often I might follow other small sports publications and they might post about an interesting article and it might be on their site, or another site, so often I might just click through onto one of those. Sometimes I'll click on it and have it open as a tab and not read it at that moment, I might come back to it on my keypad later, for example.

## Instagram & Twitter Apps

Instagram and Twitter usage throughout the day. News brands play here, though not alone.

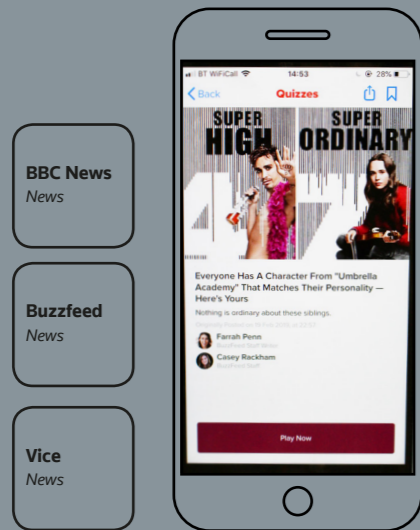




# The Heritage News Consumer

Heritage News Consumers also live in a brand-led news world, but they're notably less engaged with the news in general. While they may have news brand relationships, they often prefer easier ways of keeping up-to-date. They use news brand apps and websites or look out for their preferred TV station, but not very often, and not for long. Social media channels are considered more efficient for their time-poor life.

- Low engagement with news but when engaged they use news brands
- Consider themselves time poor, have little time for Dedicated moments
- Belief in the value of news passed on through upbringing



Get to the point and be concise. I think that's, unfortunately, the way it's going really. Because none of us have much time...The app I use most is BBC News. I know, also, everyone says that news places are kind of one-sided, but I always feel like they do give me an explanation I can skim through and find out what's going on, as much as I actually need to know without going too in-depth...I've always had the BBC, because I listen to BBC radio and have that app on my phone. Then, if my parents watch news, it's usually BBC news.

## Ellie, 18-20, UK

Self-described as a busy person with 'a lot going on', Ellie values the news and staying in touch with what's going on, but primarily as a functional and not necessarily enjoyable act. She uses the BBC News app sporadically and also BuzzFeed and Vice apps. In all instances, she values things that are quick, to the point and which she 'can skim through and find out what's going on...without going too in-depth' and ideally fun. Most of her time is spent on Snapchat or Instagram.

A trifecta of apps provides multiple, if shallow, touchpoints with news.

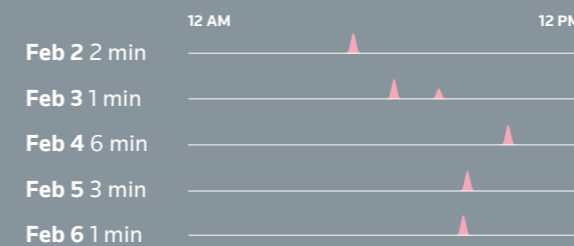
## James, 25-30, US

I usually get most of my news from Twitter. It's just so easy, the way it's laid out, you can literally find anything in seconds. Other than that, Instagram and then Facebook are pretty much next to each other.

Dedicated	Updated	Time-Filler	Intercepted
This group has almost no time to do this. In most cases, this type of use was limited to once every few weekends. When clicking through to an interesting story, they're more likely to be looking for the 'headline'.	Recognises the importance of staying up-to-date, they just don't necessarily enjoy it. They have news brand apps that they use semi regularly, for very brief windows of time.	This need for entertainment is the primary mode through which they come across news. They follow news brands on places like Twitter and enjoy a sprinkling of news along with their other sources.	Sharing is part of the digital culture of this group; it's not unusual for them to consume or send out articles through messaging apps. These tend to be focused on news stories with social capital and activism, or ones that are particularly amusing or shocking.

## BBC News App

Dedicated moments are short and somewhat forced and randomised.



Usually, if I go on my phone I'll do a bit of everything and then come off and do something else. I guess I do use social media apps a lot more throughout the day... I'll get bored. Then I go over to Instagram and this is a lot more, like, seeing what friends are up to. I follow a lot of tattoo things on there and animals, food videos. Nothing really newsy comes up as much. Again, I follow the BBC on here and sometimes I might go and look through what else they've got going on as well.

YouTube 27.45%	Safari 14.88%	Netflix 8.14%
		Facebook 4.41%
JobSpotter 11.32%	Google Maps 3.66%	Twitter 2.86%
	IMOB 3.66%	Other: BBC News <1%
Podcasts 10.30%	dealornodeal 3.47%	







# The Proactive News Lover

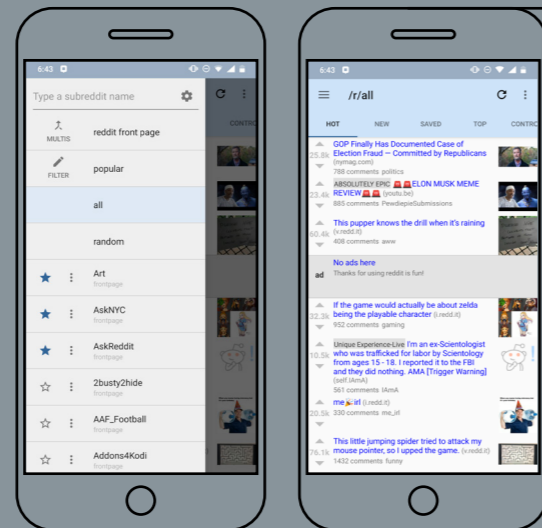
Being heavily involved with news but less tied to brands, Proactive News Lovers take the sourcing of news stories into their own hands. They still consume a lot of news, but are less tethered to a particular dedicated or updated habit, instead grazing on news throughout the day. They do this with little loyalty, meaning they're more likely to consume from different, unusual brands. Their reliance on aggregation means less time is spent with one source. They have a wider definition of what constitutes news content.

- High engagement with news but on their own terms
- They read news throughout the day, mostly through Updated and Time-filler moments
- Scepticism around the superiority of traditional news; open to alternative outlets

Maggie, 21-24, US

I check the Apple News app, but I also get access to a bunch of other news articles scrolling on social media or email. I'm subscribed to Bloomberg news, so I get emails...I see NYT, Huffington Post and other articles through social media; the apps I use the most are Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

 <p>Dedicated</p>	 <p>Updated</p>	 <p>Time-Filler</p>	 <p>Intercepted</p>
<p>Valued by this group but to a lesser extent than a Dedicated News Devotee. As this group gets so much content from so many sources, deep-dives are reserved for only the most interesting stories.</p>	<p>Catching up on what had happened overnight was the most common behaviour here. As with their social feeds, getting up-to-date first thing in the morning was a priority.</p>	<p>This was by far the highest mode of news engagement for this group. With a plethora of different methods and sources, this segment had a large number of options from which to get their news.</p>	<p>Sharing is deeply embedded in this segment, and as such, things shared by friends on feeds prompted high engagement. To a certain degree, Reddit is the ultimate expression of this moment.</p>

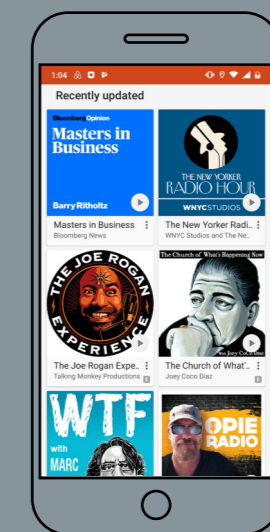


## Reddit is Fun App

When configured for news, **Reddit** is the ultimate aggregator, creating a single stream of community-endorsed stories. Reddit used with a routine similar to that of news apps.



[For] going to the gym or, like, a long commute...I want something that's going to be able to hold my attention for a little bit longer.



## Podcasts

An ideal way to consume high density content and really go in depth with an issue. They're compatible with more menial tasks, which is an added time saver.

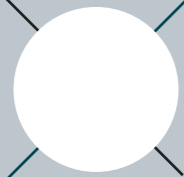
Reddit for me is the portal into what's happening, not just in the United States, but around the world, and it's easy for me to weed out what I'm not going to be interested in and it's just a really easy way to access the news. I think the agenda, in a lot of ways, makes a lot of sense, but in many ways, we're also missing out on a lot of big stories that really should be covered. Especially today, it's very easy for the news media to cover one piece of the story or one particular story and there's a lot that they're probably missing out.

## Mark, 31-35, US

Mark has an interest in staying up-to-date with what is happening, but sees traditional news brands' coverage as one dimensional, often missing out important information or headline stories. He uses a combination of self-curation and social platforms to give him a balanced picture of the world. Reddit is his main portal for accessing news, making it easy to consume lots of stories without compromising integrity. Twitter is a great way to follow the people actually making the news and to stay current. Podcasts are often his equivalent of long reads, although he also likes to save longer articles to read on his desktop later on. He is also a fan of investigatory journalism. Through podcasts, he enjoys being able to get depth on a story efficiently. He sees local NPR radios as pleasantly objective, and values 'quality' publishers, such as New York Times, Washington Post, Vice and Wall Street Journal.

Reddit allows for a high degree of self configuration while still leaning on like-minded individuals to curate interesting stories. This combination of group-mind and flexibility is an exciting alternative to the rigid world of news brands.

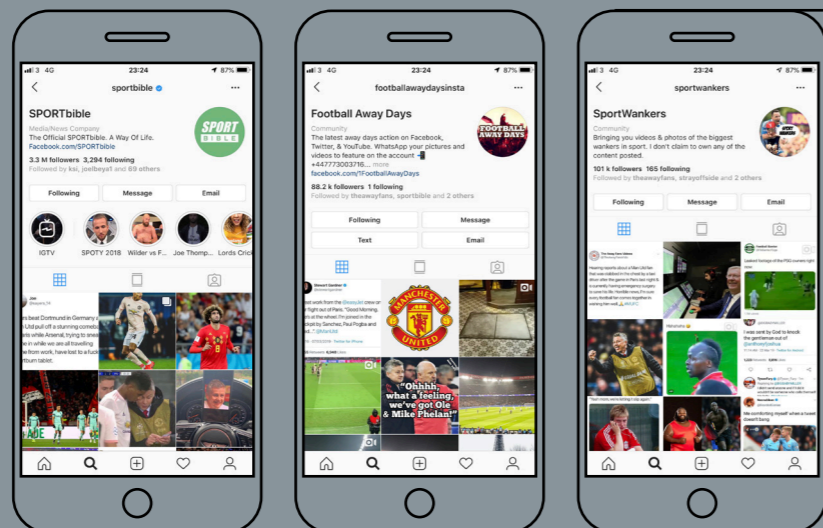




# The Passive News Absorber

As the name suggests, these people tend to let the news come to them. They are more likely to get news from friends or picking up on background radio and television than through direct consumption. Their main digital connection with news brands is often around personal interest areas (often sport) rather than the wider news. Consequently, there was little evidence of direct news consumption on their digital tracking profiles. For this reason, we surveyed two individuals to flesh out this detail.

- Lowest engagement with News of all groups
- Scepticism towards the superiority of traditional news, and its ability to offer unbiased information







## Joe, 18-20, UK

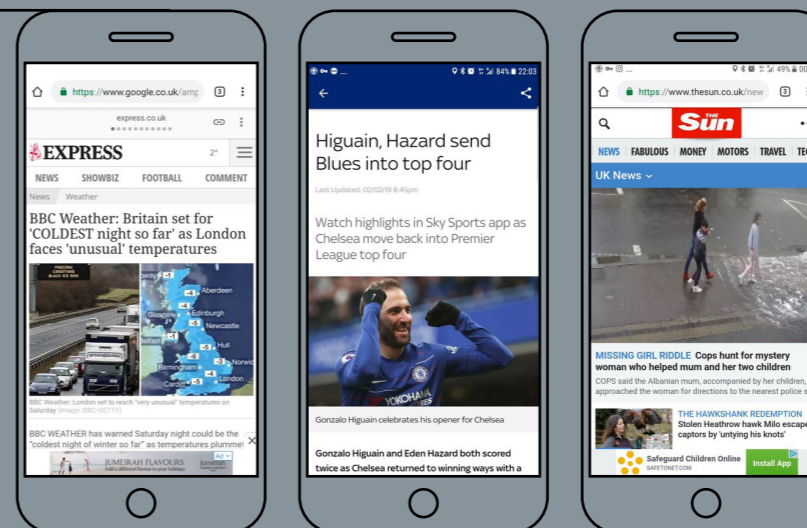
Joe is quite disinterested in news and foreign affairs. He focuses on enjoying his hobbies and entertainment; generally picking up on news through friends or social media, if the story is big enough. Over 70% of the time he spends on his phone – roughly four hours each day – is spent on Snapchat and Instagram, where big events or highly localised stories are likely to make themselves visible.

While Instagram wasn't the primary source of news, it fit neatly into 'time-filler' news moments.

## Joe, 18-20, UK

"Depending on the news, I mean, I don't think you notice it so much... Something that happens abroad, I mean, you can look at it, but you might not take it in as much."

 Dedicated	 Updated	 Time-Filler	 Intercepted
<p>This group did little to none of this outside of where it integrated into their lives. Here, traditional media played a much bigger role. Television, radio and even physical newspapers were much more likely to be mentioned.</p>	<p>We found very low evidence of determined moments like this. Again, routine commutes and other activities (like retrieving a daily newspaper for someone else) were the best evidence of this.</p>	<p>Instagram and Twitter played a big role in these individuals' lives. These were configured to be a cocktail of entertainment, where news had to compete along with other forms of content.</p>	<p>Sharing news with friends and family through messages was common, but often for comedic effect.</p>



Richard interacts with the news primarily through more traditional mediums, such as radio and television. He listens to LBC during his travel with work and sometimes watches the news on TV. Beyond that, his touchpoints are relatively sporadic, and mostly driven by sport, Instagram or intercept moments that may take him to a news website. He is primarily informed through less direct means.

## Richard, 25-30, UK

The majority of content came digitally through the Sky Sports and Sky News apps. Instances of looking at The Sun or The Express came directly through searching Google and happened a single time during analysis.



## No one-size-fits-all solution

This study didn't explore the size of these groups, but there is clearly a bigger opportunity to make progress – in terms of engagement and building brand relationships – with Dedicated News Devotees and Heritage News Consumers than with Passive News Absorbers and Proactive News Lovers.

But most of all, the impact of such a range of moments, types of news users and other factors, notably platform or medium, means that there is not going to be a single solution for increasing loyal news engagement with younger audiences.

Under-35s are looking for many different things, which on a surface level sometimes may even seem contradictory. But things start to make more sense when we understand the different roles news plays on the different platforms or media, the moments in which it appears, and the impact this then has on what young people want from the news.

It is therefore important that news content, format and tone fit the roles and moments they are intended for. Otherwise, news brands run the risk that experiences are not seamless or intuitive, and younger audiences will disengage.

*I would say my favourite type of news is videos that really lay it out, like, Vice or News Tonight, even. Just something that really quickly gives you a visual understanding of it, and a quick snapshot of a bunch of different things, instead of having to read an article for 10 minutes.*

**Maggie, 21-24, US**

*My favourite kind of news is long form, in-depth news; I guess you would call it investigative pieces.*

**Mark, 31-35, US**



## 6 Industry Insights

A driving hypothesis behind this research was that young people are less engaged with the news, and in particular with traditional news providers.

In Section 3 we touched upon a number of areas of interest from the industry conversation that could be linked to this:

- 1 The relevance of the news agenda for younger audiences**
- 2 Negativity and the news**
- 3 The state of opinions in the news**
- 4 The tone of news feeling misaligned with younger people**
- 5 The news not effectively using new formats, such as social media**
- 6 The state of trust in the news**
- 7 The feeling that there is an overwhelming amount of news**

### 1. The relevance of the news agenda for younger audiences: The wider news agenda is broadly relevant, but what dominates the headlines feels narrow and repetitive

There is - or has been for recent years - a feeling of endless coverage of the same topics, reported in the same way. For example, for those we spoke to, Brexit had seemingly been on the front pages for over a year without anything substantial changing. They paid attention to the big stories, when there was a significant shift, but the endless headlines were off-putting. 'What other important news stories might we have been missing because of this?' was a regular concern.

Young people tend to have a global outlook and often find that international stories are reported with a nationalistic style, rather than an honest or local perspective, which jars with their attitudes toward global content. Brands like Al Jazeera were mentioned positively because it was felt that they told stories in a more authentic way, using local voices and perspectives.

Young people also have a strong appetite for coverage of a broader range of topics in general, such as arts & culture, activism, the environment and LGBTQ+. While this kind of content is available, major news brands should, and can be, even more diverse and inclusive. Primarily, younger audiences are interested in human, personal and real stories that inspire their goals in life, which lends itself to wider coverage.

Anna, 21-24, UK

I think sometimes I like to feel a bit empowered or inspired. So, I think [I like] amazing human stories and wellbeing, how to help yourself feel better.

### 2. Negativity and the news: The news is seen as overly negative, but there's more to it than this

As expected, young people do tend to view the news as negative but this isn't always as simple a story as it sounds. 'Negative' in terms of the news can mean different things to different people, which changes their response to it and therefore the solution. For some, negative stories are to be expected, and it doesn't really change their perception of news brands, which are simply doing their job of reporting what is happening in the world. However, there is still a sense among young people that news brands are overplaying the negative.

This perceived negativity has a number of facets to it:

- Negative stories (violence, crime, hate), without reference to the positive action surrounding it
- Perceived unfairness in targeting people, particularly those in the public eye (politicians, celebrities)
- Perceived favouring of certain groups, particularly white middle class males, but this depends on the issue
- Too many extreme opinions given equal voice, often in the name of being balanced or impartial

Chloe, 31-35, UK

It's exactly that thing. They try and make it even, so much so they're completely skewing everything, by that one person being constantly interviewed or constantly shared.

Ellie, 18-20, UK

The Daily Mail is always on social media, trying to make someone look bad. Someone put up something about tennis players, the other day, and there were four of them and Serena Williams had an awful picture and all the others were all glammed up and had all their make-up done. It was so blatantly trying to be against this one person.

### 3. The state of opinions in the news: People want genuine opinions, not politicised interpretations

Younger audiences seem to see impartial news as an unattainable ideal. It is seen as something worth striving for, but it is not a given, or a must. At the same time, young people don't want to be told their point of view, they want to explore a topic and have help in developing their own point of view.

In this regard, most news is felt to be either fact-focused and bland, or overly partisan, which drives the interpretation of facts and events. This perceived ideology-driven approach links back to some of the different facets of negativity in the news.

Of course, there is a time and a place for sharing opinions (Twitter and Reddit, most notably) and this human-led, conversational and interactive style does resonate and attract much attention. But under-35s have a desire to be exposed to a variety of genuine opinions, and also to interpretations that break away from the repetitive and overly-simplified left / right divide. They are more driven by the facts or authentic human situation of a story. The value of traditional news brands to this audience is still rooted in their history of quality journalism. While they may enjoy delving into the highly opinionated comments on a Reddit or YouTube trail, this doesn't mean they want traditional news brands to be behaving in the same way.

Anna, 21-24, UK

**I think in the past I'd want to have kept up with the headlines more, and now it's so politicised that I'm far more interested in engaging with discussions on certain areas. I suppose the only headlines I'd really be interested in consuming would be world events.**

Clive, 25-30, UK

**What I don't like about them is them trying to push their own political stance or view too much. Trying to convince someone to adopt their own beliefs.**

### 4. The tone of news feels misaligned with younger people: It is not always relevant; it can swing between extremes

Unsurprisingly, the tone of the news often doesn't strike the right note for younger audiences. Exposure to so many different media and types of content online comes with a diverse range of tones, all suiting different spaces or moments.

In general, the tone of news items can at times feel overly serious, institutional, dry, and technical for younger people. This is especially inaccessible when the reader has a limited education or background knowledge and involvement on the topic, as is more likely among younger readers.

At other times, the tone is too strident and focussed on superficial attention-grabbing, sometimes slipping towards 'click-bait' (this even applies to more 'reputable' news brands).

This audience responds better to more human approaches, stories, touches of informality, honest opinions (real people, real points of view), and comedy or entertainment.

Clive, 25-30, UK

**But that comes into click bait again. They'll write a headline just to draw you in and then you get opinionated. Then you'll have something else on a completely different opinion the next day...I feel like people are trying to have opinions for no reason at the moment.**

Edward, 21-24, UK

**Usually it's more light hearted, funny stuff. It's rare that a friend of mine will share a really serious article. It will usually be something funny.**

### 5. The news not effectively using new formats: News doesn't always feel in sync with the media environment it's in

With its vital role in society and cultural heritage, the authority of traditional news brands remains prominent among all audiences. But for younger audiences, news brands' behaviour either on their own websites or a third party's is not always in line with the content, format and style of how users interact with each particular platform.

On social media, in particular, this also means a lack of sensitivity to the role each platform plays in the person's repertoire of social media apps. A news item often appears as though it hasn't tried to adapt at all to the new environment and therefore does not fit the aesthetic, flow and cues of the platform, so fails to get any attention. Or a news piece on social media can appear as though its sole aim is to get the user off that platform and onto the brand's website. We know that this audience's goal is a seamless online experience, so this too is usually unsuccessful.

**A deeper look into audience response to new formats suggests that they still have potential. However, these formats risk appearing inauthentic, possibly due to misunderstanding the format or the value of traditional news providers**

At other times, news brands risk credibility by trying too hard to fit a certain platform, imitating the style of other non-news brands that have had success there. Similarly, on their own news websites, more innovative formats targeted at younger audiences often risk going too far or make predictable and not very engaging assumptions about what the audience wants from news. Here, traditional news providers can come across like an 'embarrassing parent' by trying to be cool or dumbing down content. Equally, though, if done well, some of these formats have the potential to drive direct engagement. This often means trusting the authority and heritage of the traditional news brand.

Chloe, 31-35, UK

**Well, this is just annoying that all these media news outlets are trying to dumb down... The thing for me is when there's an article and then there's some visual, kind of, fun, quirky, additions.**

Adele, 25-30, UK

**If the comic strip is the news I'd probably give up on it. Is this trying to make young people interested in what's going on in the world?**

	Short video	Visual Stories	Illustrated formats	Conversational or 'chat-boxes'	Expander formats
	e.g. Vox's videos <sup>16</sup>	e.g. the BBC's Insta-stories <sup>17</sup>	e.g. the BBC's illustrated articles <sup>18</sup>	e.g. The Guardian's chat format <sup>19</sup>	e.g. the BBC's background information explainers <sup>20</sup>
	Integrated experience  Feels real and often raw to the story  Explainers are valued  BUT can be time consuming and too demanding if want a quick overview or detailed analysis	For some, it feels too childish. For others it resonates, if it's on social media  Works when it relies only on images; paragraphs show lack of format understanding  Seen to suit simplicity: lists or timelines etc.	Feels like an exciting alternative to the standard format of word and photo  But can be too much, or too hard to follow  Best used to support an article, like an alternative to photos	Conversational tone or participation, e.g. quiz, resonates  But execution cannot disrupt seamlessly consuming content  Can be disorientating or OTT  Conversation captures value of podcasts	Highly valued due to audience's lack of background knowledge  Works best when easy, non-disruptive  Prefer expanders that are on the same page  Context dependent (e.g. explaining mid-term elections had less appeal in the US)

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.vox.com/2018/1/3/16845438/exercise-weight-loss-myth-burn-calories>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/ampstories/moonmess/index.html>

<sup>18</sup> [https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-sh/secret\\_lesbian\\_language](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-sh/secret_lesbian_language)

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/ng-interactive/2019/jan/11/the-internet-but-not-as-we-know-it-life-online-in-china-russia-cuba-and-india>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-c2d5bac7-3827-44d1-b5a0-8e6c637736b2>



## 6. The state of trust in the news: Fake news is not a problem but a nuisance, and also a potential opportunity for attribution

We didn't find, in our interviews, quite the crisis of trust in the media that we often hear about among young people. There is a general disbelief at some of the politicised opinion thrown around, but there is also a lot of appreciation of the quality of some of the individuals' favoured brands.

Fake news itself is seen as more of a nuisance than a democratic meltdown, especially given that the perceived scale of the problem is relatively small compared with the public attention it seems to receive. Users therefore feel capable of taking these issues into their own hands. Concerns about their ability to genuinely spot fake news are well grounded but, importantly for traditional news brands, young people are actively trying to do so.

Since trust issues and the fake news phenomenon have been so well publicised, users are now looking more at the source of a news item when on third party platforms, particularly Facebook. This is driven by a desire to consume news from a wide range of sources, as well as the desire to avoid perceived politicised – or potentially false – output from certain disagreeable or unknown brands. The result is greater potential brand attribution on these platforms, as well as a reliance on traditional, 'reputable' news brands, which are seen as providing a guarantee for trusted information and, to an extent, provide a heuristic for validation.

Ryan, 18-20, US

The term 'fake news'; I've tried my hardest not to fully ignore the topic.

Maggie, 21-24, US

If I see something like New York Times, Bloomberg, Washington Post, I'm going to assume that it's credible and valid, but if I see something that's on a news website that I've never heard of before, I'm more likely to question the source of the news.

Ellie, 18-20, UK

Most places that I follow are quite established. You know, they've been there a while. They are more trustworthy. I think when new ones start popping up, that's when you find it slightly harder to trust them.

Chloe, 31-35, UK

I think I'm much more limited in the news that I access now, because of this... I think the ones that you trust are the traditional ones that have been around for a long time, like the BBC, The Guardian, The Independent.

## 7. The feeling that there is an overwhelming amount of news: The news can feel like a chore

In Section 4, we revealed that the role of news for under-35s is primarily individualistic, which means they are slightly more detached from motivations around its role in wider society. Combining some of the issues mentioned above with current potential perceptions of the news can contribute to the sense that consuming the news sometimes feels like a chore, rather than something people actively want to do.

People have their own individual methods of cutting through the general media noise (e.g. using aggregators or social media, or taking a digital detox and even avoiding the news all together). But, as we know, often the news feels negative in different ways; it requires effort to understand, is less engaging than other more entertaining media content, and sometimes lacks the seamlessness young people have come to expect from the online world. They 'get through it' because of an intangible sense that they have to, rather than because they choose to.

Luke, 21-24, UK

If someone hadn't read about Brexit at all until now and then tried to pick it up and they're seeing what's going on, they wouldn't have a clue what it's going to be like. You'd have to look everything up from scratch and then it would be even more of a chore.

Chloe, 31-35, UK

Well, there's so much bad news going on. You feel like it's something on your to do list, you know, you've got to try... It does feel like a chore, definitely.

Maggie, 21-24, US

I feel like I do a lot of reading with school and stuff, and sometimes it's easy to feel, if I'm reading an article, that it's just another thing to read.

*Every news source you go to has some kind of agenda, whatever that might be, so there is bias in the news. It's really hard to fix a bias, isn't it? No news source, not even the BBC, is able to completely show something free of any prejudice or bias... that's the thing with reading a lot of different sources.*

Chloe, 31-35, UK





## Young people's attitudes towards paying for the news

What does this all mean for young people's willingness to pay for news? The New York Times's success in generating revenue from digital subscriptions<sup>21</sup>—and signs that this might be a wider trend, at least in the US<sup>22</sup>—means payment is a hot topic.

Ultimately, attitudes to payment uncovered in this study were not particularly positive. But there are some key occasions where young audiences might be willing to pay for news:

- If they have a personal closeness to a brand and what it stands for. This might not necessarily be political or view-based, but led by journalistic rigour and quality or style, or the brand's approach to forming points of view.
- If a brand provides unique content that they need in order to learn and progress in their career.
- If a brand offers something unique that they would struggle to get anywhere else (personal interests, relevant specialist knowledge e.g. sport or theatre).
- And, on occasion, if their parents paid for their subscriptions (parental news legacy, or a 'worthy' birthday present).

But this is true for only a select few (mainly Dedicated News Devotees or possibly an Active News Lover). Young people will pay for entertainment (Spotify, Netflix, Hulu etc.) but currently the overwhelming majority won't pay for news<sup>23</sup>. The reasons for this boil down to a number of key themes:

- **Mindset** - News should be free: access to news feels like a fundamental right and it should be available for all, not just those who can afford it.
- **Benefit** - Willing to pay for pleasure: budgets are tight, if the news already feels like a chore, you don't want to have to pay for it too.
- **Need** - They have access already: many under-35s have, by and large, grown up with unlimited ways to access news for free.
- **Usage** - Payments don't fit consumption: this audience values using multiple sources in a world where nothing is impartial and fake news is a risk. It is unrealistic to pay for them all and harder to justify 'the one' they might be willing to pay for.
- **Method** - Perception that options are limited: monthly subscriptions don't fit news habits and expectations for this audience, yet are the only method they are aware of.

Based on what we know about our young audiences' preferences and behaviours, we have formulated some provocations around payment methods:



	Reduce Friction	Smaller But More Frequent	More Options, More Control	Shared Accounts	Brand Bundles
	<b>The issue:</b> It can be annoying and disruptive to the online experience when you suddenly cannot access an article you want	<b>The issue:</b> This audience likes the freedom to bring variety to their online experience and budgets are tight so money is for right now	<b>The issue:</b> This audience is used to curating their online world	<b>The issue:</b> Parents can influence perceived value of subscriptions, and a perceived benefit of Netflix / Spotify subscriptions is shared or family accounts	<b>The issue:</b> Accessing multiple news sources is important
	<b>Consider:</b> Pay per article, but avoid click-bait as they expect disappointment	<b>Consider:</b> Payment methods closer to how people used to pay for print every day	<b>Consider:</b> Pay for single sections (sport), like Sky TV; full access only for the weekend; a daily cap, or 'Oyster card' style top-up system	<b>Consider:</b> Cheaper per person or offer more user flexibility and family deals	<b>Consider:</b> An aggregator or top-up system shared across partner brands
	<b>Sam, 25-30, US</b> <b>You know, perhaps payment would get so easy as to just say, 'hey, you want to read this one article? It's 5 cents'.</b>	<b>Gabrielle, 18-20, US</b> <b>If you were to charge me \$0.50 a day, [not] when it's grouped into \$10 a week or a month or whatever... I'd give \$0.50 every day. I have so many coins.</b>	<b>Ryan, 18-20, US</b> <b>The Athletic is really the only paid sports subscription out there right now...</b>	<b>Ellie, 18-20, UK</b> <b>My mum got one [Netflix account], but before that I was using my boyfriend's brother's girlfriend's, or something. There's a long chain of us.</b>	<b>Victoria, 25-30, UK</b> <b>Wouldn't it be good if they have this news app where it has lots of different things, but all the ones I can't access, I don't pay for? Wouldn't it be good if you could just pay there all in one place?</b>

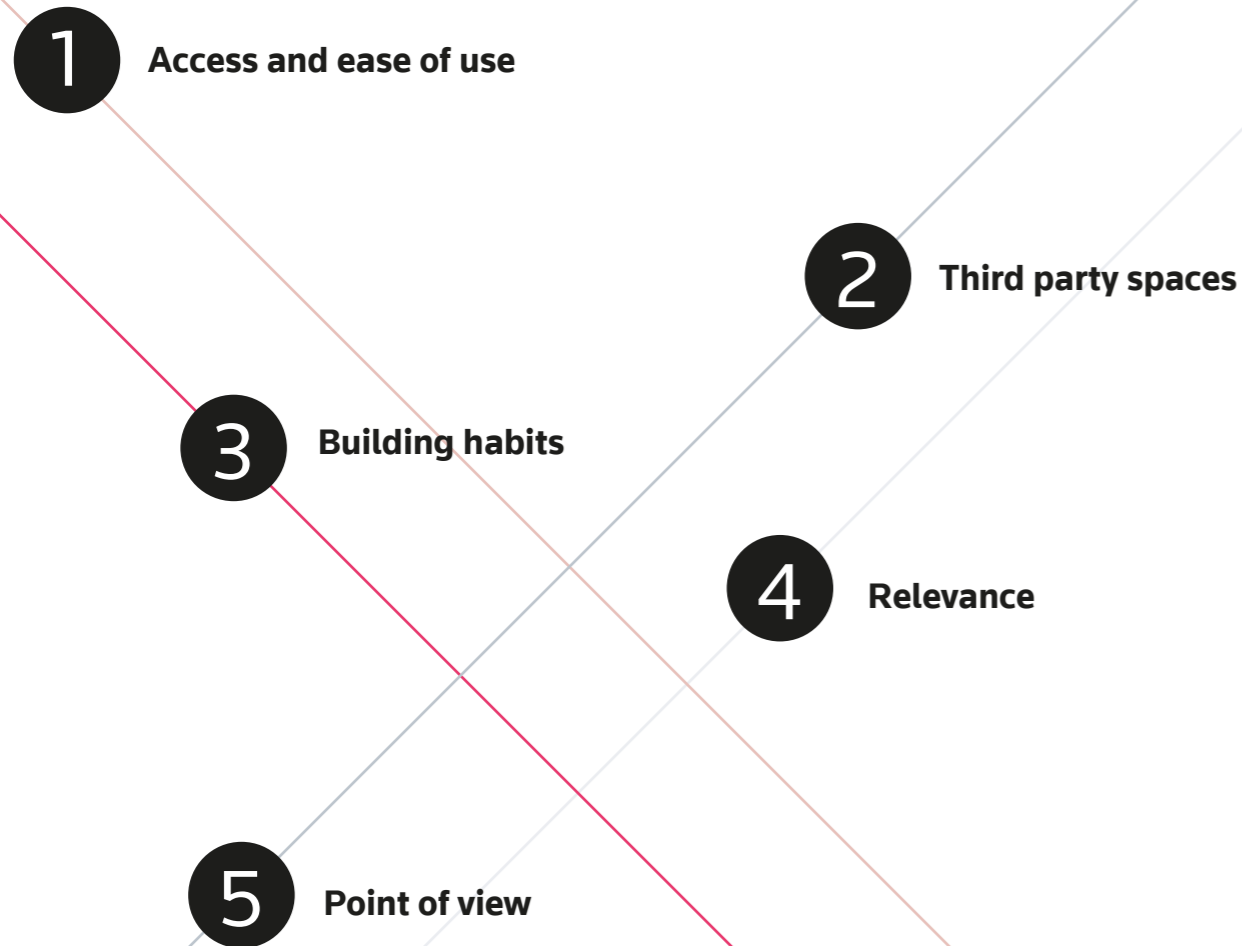




# 7 Strategic Options

## Guide To Producing Content To Engage Younger Audiences

The study identified five summary challenges for news providers wishing to better engage with under-35s. These are:



In order to consider potential strategic options for news brands, a semiotic audit of popular media platforms was carried out, using these five summary challenges as 'lenses' for the analysis. The aim was to analyse and understand the variety of techniques (such as tone of voice, layout, UX, and style) that brands use to meet these challenges, and to use this as a basis for generating questions that news brands can ask themselves when producing content.

The analysis focused primarily on those sources that respondents themselves shared and identified as engaging (without necessarily being able to articulate or analyse more deeply the reasons they found these sources engaging). This source list was supplemented with examples of recent content aimed at engaging young audiences provided by the Reuters Institute, as well as desk research.

## 1. Access and Ease of Use

This type of content responds to audience frustration around complex or lengthy news stories, particularly those that require sufficient background information or knowledge to engage with.

It breaks down complicated issues and makes them easy to understand.

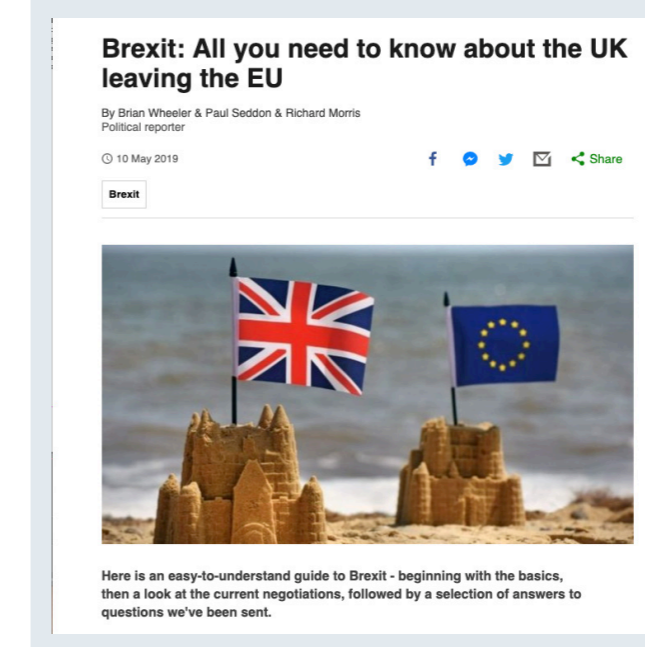
### Examples:

A video and accompanying article by Vox, 'How Marginal Tax Brackets Actually Work'<sup>24</sup> quickly debunks popular assumptions around increasing tax rates on wealth, explaining a complicated policy issue efficiently through simple, effective illustrations.

A regularly-updated BBC guide, 'Brexit: All you need to know about the UK leaving the EU'<sup>25</sup> offers short, factual answers to the most popularly asked questions around the Brexit process (such as 'Could Brexit be cancelled?'), as well as an interactive 'jargon buster'. The website is designed so that readers can quickly skim to the areas that interest them, or study in depth relevant policy documents.

<sup>24</sup> [www.vox.com/2019/1/18/18187056/tax-bracket-marginal-video](http://www.vox.com/2019/1/18/18187056/tax-bracket-marginal-video)

<sup>25</sup> [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-32810887](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-32810887)



## Key questions for news brands producing content in this space:

- How can complex information be presented in bite-sized ways?
- How can we make news feel less like a chore?
- How can we ensure that illustrations and animations enhance rather than disrupt the user experience?
- How can we help people with limited time easily navigate or skim lengthy content?
- How can mainstream brands leverage their authority to clarify complicated issues?
- What can we do to prevent more innovative formats from overcomplicating the news experience?
- How can we make long-running stories with lots of background information feel accessible?
- Can we harness technology to personalise the content they need (showing explanatory boxes or simpler language just to those that need them)?

## 2. Third Party Spaces

Audiences feel that news content on third party platforms have not been designed for how they use the platform, are often trying to get them off the platform and onto another ('click-bait'), and/or feel inauthentic to the news brand, unsuccessfully mimicking content that is native to the platform.

Content that succeeds in 'third party spaces' feels authentically part of the platform where the audience encounters it, while still managing to cue brand awareness. This content enhances rather than detracts from the user's experience of the platform.

### Examples:

Netflix's Twitter account<sup>26</sup> features discussions of newly hosted content and TV-related news with short, auto-play subtitled videos. The tweets allow users to engage with Twitter as normal while keeping abreast of the brand.

The Instagram account History Cool Kids<sup>27</sup> features eye-catching, Instagram-style photography with short historical anecdotes in the captions. Its popularity suggests that news brands might experiment with formats other than traditional photojournalism in order to better engage with the ways users enjoy the platform.

It should be recognised that much of this is dependent on platforms offering sustainable monetisation models and better attribution. Until these issues are properly addressed news brands are likely to continue to under-invest in truly native content (beyond marketing) and it will be hard to engage younger consumers in the platforms where they spend most of their time.

<sup>26</sup> [www.twitter.com/netflix](http://www.twitter.com/netflix)

<sup>27</sup> [www.instagram.com/historycoolkids/?hl=en](http://www.instagram.com/historycoolkids/?hl=en)



## Key questions for news brands producing content in this space:

- How can we tell the story through the medium the platform provides, rather than forcing our own medium into the platform?
- Can the same story be broken into different versions (Instagram photo-timeline, a Twitter thread, and a longform article)?
- How can photography play to the creative rules of Instagram rather than traditional photojournalism?
- How can we ensure the user feels like they're receiving real content rather than an advertisement?
- How can our content enhance the experience of the platform?
- How can we consistently communicate our signature style on different platforms?
- How can we leverage audiences' increased desire for reputable sources?

## 3. Building habits

The decline of traditional, habitual forms of news consumption presents a major challenge for news brands.

Content in this space encourages and facilitates habitual consumption by its audience, in two ways:

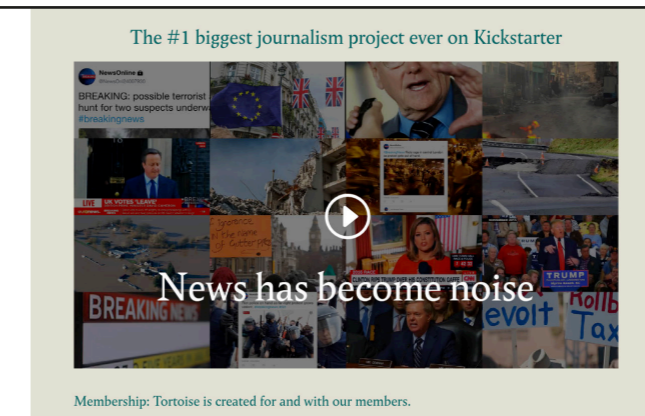
1. Attempting to restore traditional news habits
2. Generating new forms of habit anchored in contemporary life (e.g. reading on public transport)

### Examples:

The Espresso app, by the Economist, provides daily news briefings via a series of 'short reads'. Each story requires around three scrolls on a phone, and always ends on an interesting quote – functioning as a kind of 'snack' that can be consumed on-the-go.

Tortoise News () has invested significant amounts of money in a 'slow news' platform, which it says will combat superficial content with in-depth investigative pieces. The brand aims to re-introduce committed engagement with the news through its unique content proposition, as well as live interactive events.

<sup>28</sup> [www.tortoisemedia.com](http://www.tortoisemedia.com)



## Key questions for news brands producing content in this space:

- How do we create dedicated news occasions in a busy and fragmented world?
- How do we fit both content and format to contemporary news moments?
- How can we use reminders/notifications in ways that encourage rather than deter users?
- How can we create experiences that are as personal, relevant and easy as Facebook and Netflix?
- How can we build habitual engagement with our brand on third party platforms?
- How can we become the go-to for updates?
- How can we take advantage of different needs at different times of day?
- What does 'habit' look like for different types of newsreaders?

## 4. Relevance

Audiences have consistently said that they struggle to engage with news that feels distant and unrelated to their lives. News in this space is made to feel relevant to readers' lives through both form and content.

### Examples:

Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez<sup>29</sup> questioning ethics experts on campaign finance laws became the most-watched political video on Twitter, and was mentioned by several respondents. Her massive popularity among our study audience suggests that her brand of youthfully combative politics inspires people who otherwise feel disconnected to that world.

User-powered Citizen<sup>30</sup>, popular with NY audience, alerts users to crimes and emergencies within their neighbourhood. Amateur videos filmed on-app have later been broadcast on mainstream news, facilitating a more personal relationship between user-generated content and news brands.

<sup>29</sup> [www.youtube.com/watch?v=h810bO-4LIs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h810bO-4LIs)

<sup>30</sup> [appitunes.apple.com/us/app/citizen/id1039889567?mt=8](https://appitunes.apple.com/us/app/citizen/id1039889567?mt=8)



## 5. Point of View

The audiences in the study expressed concern that news brands often force their own ideology on the reader. In contrast, news brands in this space enable the audience to develop their own point of view – not necessarily by avoiding opinion, but by presenting multiple opinions, or offering considered rather than polemic evaluation of the news.

### Examples:

The Guardian, The Internet<sup>31</sup> is an unusual multimedia article that emulates people's experience of the internet in countries shaped by censorship or slow connections. Audiences found the experimental formatting engaging and informative, and said that it helped them develop a perspective on internet freedom and access.

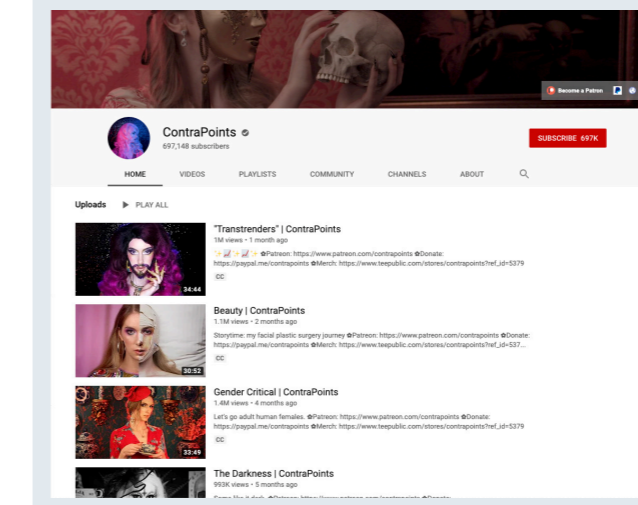
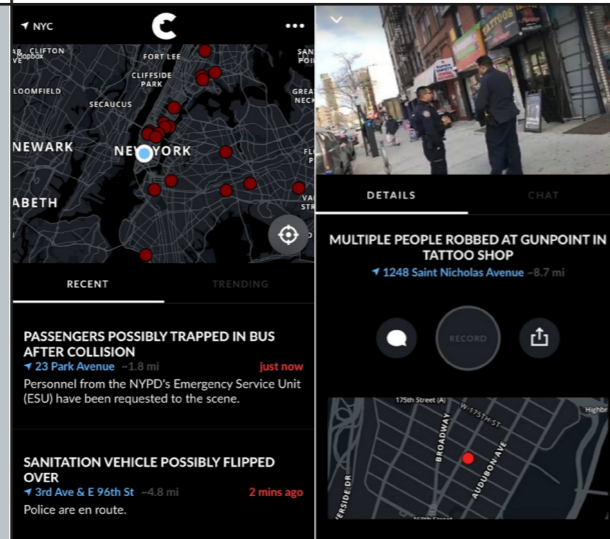
Trans YouTube star Contrapoints<sup>32</sup>: regularly gains over 1 million viewers with 20 min+ videos discussing contemporary news and politics. Combining creative theatrics with sharp analysis, especially on contemporary internet debates/trends, audiences appreciate the fact that she thoughtfully considers her opponents' arguments.

<sup>31</sup> [www.theguardian.com/technology/ng-interactive/2019/jan/11/the-internet-but-not-as-we-know-it-life-online-in-china-russia-cuba-and-india](https://www.theguardian.com/technology/ng-interactive/2019/jan/11/the-internet-but-not-as-we-know-it-life-online-in-china-russia-cuba-and-india)

<sup>32</sup> [www.youtube.com/channel/UCNvslonJdJ5E4EXMa65VYpA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNvslonJdJ5E4EXMa65VYpA)

## Key questions for news brands producing content in this space:

- How can we broaden our agenda without risking our traditional audience?
- How can we facilitate a more democratic and participatory relationship with audiences?
- What tweaks can we make to remind our audiences that they have a stake in the issues?
- How can we marry our brand authority with user-generated content?
- How can we tell global stories that feel 'ground-up' for a worldly and interconnected audience?
- How can we inspire young audiences around the possibility of change and positive action?
- How can we deliver innovative formats that feel authentically youthful?
- How can our tone feel more human and honest?



## Key questions for news brands producing content in this space:

- If we want to deliver opinion, how do we ensure it feels considered and substantiated?
- How do we offer a variety of opinions without misrepresenting the facts or the degree of support behind them?
- How do we interact with opposing views in a way that feels intelligent and fair?
- What role do we want to maintain in relation to superficial 'hot topics'?
- How can the opinions we showcase facilitate our audience to develop their own perspective rather than adopt a ready-made one?
- How can we ensure that we engage with divergent or unpopular views in ways that feel respectful rather than exploitative?



## 8 Conclusions

This study shows that young people are less likely to go directly to news apps and websites, and spend much of their time online with social media and entertainment services. Against this background, it has proved hard to attract attention to traditional news content—which is often seen as a chore—or to news brands that often feel irrelevant to their personal lives.

But none of this means that young people aren't interested in news and information. Keeping up to date with a wide range of issues remains important for their identity, for their ability to connect and for their chances of career and life progression. But the expectations of both Gen Z and young Millennials are significantly different from older groups. News needs to deliver value to them as individuals, not just for society. It needs to support their desire to progress in life as well as entertain and engage them.

In response, traditional news brands will need to change both the format, the tone and the agenda of what they do. They'll need to provide not just 'what you should know' but also what is useful, interesting and fun to know. But young people do not want traditional news brands to lose or disconnect with their authority and credibility. They do not want the news media to dumb down.

There are no one-size-fits-all solutions for how to reach a group of people who have so many different interests and aspirations. But, based on the findings from this study, we propose three key ways in which traditional media needs to change:

1

**The experience of news should feel as easy and accessible as Facebook and Netflix.** This is partly about the way the content is written and presented – with clearer language and more explanatory content – but also about how relevant and interesting content is surfaced without having to work for it. Instant, frictionless access, recommendations that feel relevant and useful, and the right tone of voice will be critical to building loyalty and trust with these groups.

2

**News brands need to tell stories in ways that fit the expectations of young people, and the moments when they are open to news.** This means creating more formats that are native to mobile and social platforms as well as incorporating these ideas into their own websites and apps. Visual formats, as well as on-demand audio podcasts, resonate strongly with young people because they have become integral to how they spend time on their mobile phones in general, and how they share and discuss content.

3

**The way the news media covers stories may need to change.** Young people are often put off by relentlessly negative news. They don't want the media to shy away from serious or difficult stories, but as part of the mix they want stories that can inspire them about the possibility of change and provide a path to positive action. They are tired of media agendas and stereotypes, but are not looking for blandness or balance for balance's sake. Younger audiences respond to stories with a 'point of view' as well as human stories told from a ground up perspective. Authenticity, fairness, diversity and inclusiveness are the kind of values that resonate with under-35s. At the same time, journalism in the future needs to give young people more of a stake in stories and their outcomes.

Even if the media adopts these suggestions, there is no guarantee of success. Our segmentation work suggests that a significant proportion of young people in the US and UK will be hard to engage given their low interest in news. Building brand loyalty with these more 'passive' groups will be tough, though it is possible that they will become more engaged as they take on greater responsibility and enter a different life-stage. But other groups like the News Devotees and Heritage Consumers, and to an extent the Proactive News Lovers, offer more opportunities to build dedicated and direct moments for news as well as an ongoing connection throughout the day.

Achieving this will require a relentless focus on the needs of younger audiences, but also a deep understanding of the motivations that underpin behaviour. We hope this report will contribute to this process.



*You know, if someone hadn't read about Brexit at all until now and then tried to pick it up they wouldn't have a clue what it's going to be like. You'd have to look everything up from scratch, and then it would be even more of a chore.*

Luke, 21-24, UK



# 9 Appendix

## Appendix 1: Locations & Sample

London, UK

New York, USA

Both market leaders for digital news media and key countries of interest for the Reuters Institute and many of its partners.

The sample was broken down into four age brackets that roughly aligned with Generation Y (Millennials) and Generation Z (Gen Z).

Flamingo spoke to two people within the age brackets in both locations, making sure to cover a 50:50 split of gender, university educated or non-university educated, and light or heavy news readers.

Other factors that were taken into account for the sample were a proportional representation of political standpoints and a range of primary news brands. We also spoke to two people in each location who paid for an online news subscription.

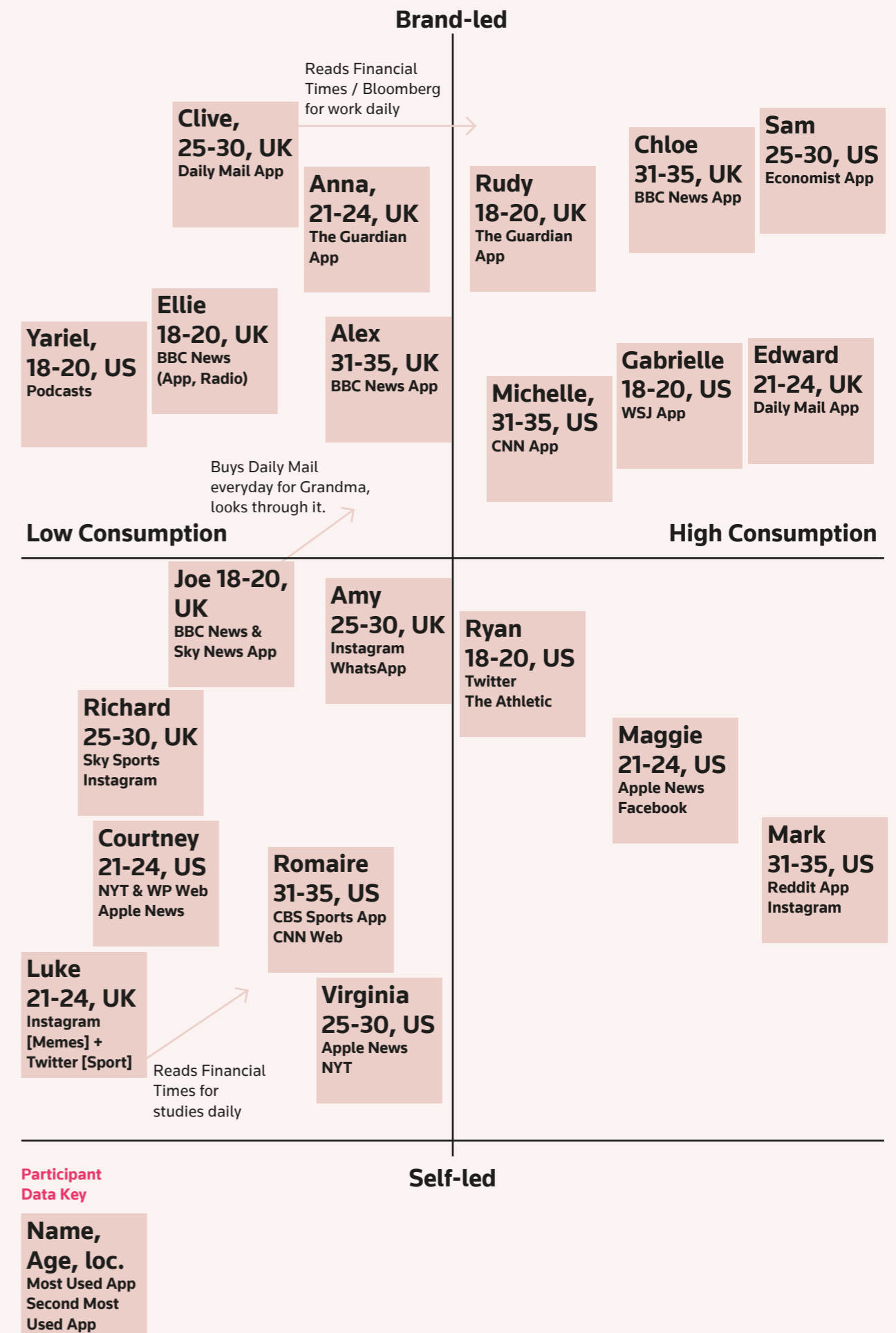
## Appendix 2: Digital Tracking Data

More information on all digital tracking data here:

<https://bit.ly/2Pf73ro>

Age brackets	Gen Z	Gen Y
	18-20	25-30
	21-24	31-35

## Appendix 3: Participant Map





## Appendix 4: Further Quotes

### Quotes on brand perception

Clive, 25-30, UK

Daily Mail is my go-to...It would probably be someone that is antagonising, looking for a problem, but straight forward, to the point...It's quite funny, cos you have certain personalities, like Piers Morgan, that sometimes argue between each other, between different points of view. It can be quite comical day to day... It's something to unwind with. I am very sceptical of what they write, at the same time. I think they're one of the first to come out with a breaking headline, which always sparks my interest. But it's not always accurate.

Ed, 25-30, UK

[The Daily Mail is] Funny, outgoing, someone who doesn't take themselves too seriously. But also someone who might curb the truth, who may tell a few porky pies to get attention...I really like the tone. Light-hearted and easy to understand, which is really important for things like politics and natural disasters. Tells stories in an easy way.

Courtney, 21-24, US

I like BuzzFeed. They have cute videos. I feel like, when I think of BuzzFeed I don't think of their more serious stuff, I think of 'We told three people to try really long nails for a week, and this is what happened.' I don't really take it too seriously.

Michelle, 31-35, US

I like CNN simply because it's convenient. When I wake up in the morning I open CNN and it has a news briefing and I see everything that's going on. It's easy to stay up-to-date on current events.

Mark, 31-35, US

What's great about NPR is not only do they have really great local sources for news, you feel like you're getting a great view of what's happening locally, especially at NYC, they really cover all of the issues. But when you hear about stories from something happening in Texas, you hear from the Texas NPR reporter, and it's not really a political stance, it's more about the actual news. It's what's happening without a political slant. [New York Times has] a really great standard of reporting, great reporters, they break a lot of stories, just the overall setup of the website and the actual newspapers. Really professional and, what you expect from a newspaper... It really comes down to the reporter and the journalism level; you feel like they're actually embedded with the story, they're living the story. They're not just seeing the story happen, you know, 100ft away.

Clive, 31-35, UK

[The Guardian] is a newspaper that does more or less align with my politics. The things it highlights or brings up are things that I want to know about. You know, I'm not the typical Vice reader, who's like young, and drinks a lot, really cool and edgy. I'm not that person. I'm not The Times, either. It just feels like it's more the things I'm interested in. It has a real focus on culture, whereas in some other newspapers and publications, they don't have that. For example, Dolly Alderton writes sometimes in The Guardian. She also used to write in the Times. I like the way she writes. It's an anecdotal way of writing... It has 'A letter to,' where people write a letter to their dead dad or something, I like to consume those, it's not fun, but human level things... I feel like at least it's trying to do something good for the world. It doesn't always get it right.

Alex, 31-35, UK

In terms of, just, pure aesthetics, I think the way the [BBC] app looks, I just like the way its set out, I like the colour and set out of it, the headlines always seem to be quite concise, like it doesn't feel like a misleading headline, so it's a decent headline, and eye-catching headline, but it's not one that you would sit there and go 'oh, I've been misled by that headline'...I don't find it is telling me their opinion as opposed to just telling me what the actual news story is.

Alex, 31-35, UK

I was particularly interested in looking at international news from, like, not a western, biased perspective. So, for those purposes I really liked Al Jazeera, because I feel like it spoke of the United States news in a way that wasn't highly biased, and it was just the facts laid out. Even for national news, using Al Jazeera as an outsider's perspective to read it.

Maggie, 21-24, US

New York Times and Washington Post are usually reliable. Obviously, something like the Wall Street Journal is usually fine.

### Quotes on different formats

#### Video

Amy, 25-30, UK

I'm on Instagram, for example, and there are videos on there, that could send me to a link to somewhere else... It depends what I'm looking for, but if I'm scrolling that could be anything from a post on Facebook to a video on Instagram to an article on BBC News or something. So, it sort of depends where I am and what I'm looking for.

Victoria, 25-30, UK

I would say video [is my favourite type of news]. Basically, snippets of TV but not actually accessed through TV but on digital... I don't like how this one [Vox exercise] is made... I would watch the video if this woman was just there and some experts, but not with some stupid, archival bits and stupid music.

Courtney, 21-24, US

I like the fact I can watch a video and then stop the video and then it'll save my place in case I want to go back to that video.

#### Visual story-telling with images

Ruby, 18-20, UK

Okay, that's cool, like a Snapchat story. I think it's better for young people so they don't have to read as much and get confused. It's really short. It's not paragraphs. I like that. Then whenever you click you can share it to social media and that. That's interesting.... You could probably put it on Snapchat as well where we'll get it easier.

Sophie, 21-24, UK

The text feels quite BBC Bitesize... But really helpful for a quick top up of knowledge... This would be great if it was about a self-assessment tax return.

#### Comic strip

Adele & Clive, 25-30, UK

Adele: If the comic strip [long form article as comic strip] is the news I'd probably give up on it. Is this for trying to make young people be interested in what's going on in the world?

Clive: That's annoying... Feels like it goes on forever.

Sam, Christopher & Ryan, 25-30, US

Yes, look at The Guardian, cartoon-like story. It's, like, 'What is this?' I would not even start this if I came across this. The New York Times had a great one this summer about climbing Everest. I think that's what it was, and it had cool 3D videos embedded into it, great infographics, it had some awesome testimonials. But there's a difference to this, which, to me, is hard to read...

#### Expander formats

Adele & Clive, 25-30, UK

Clive: Yes, I agree. I think this is very good for a younger audience.

Adele: It starts educating them in a different world of what's going on.

Clive: I remember growing up with news and just thinking I've got to look up so much stuff that I don't understand. And if it was there, then I'd hope it wasn't biased in any way.

Clive: It's almost like a dictionary or thesaurus and you just click on a word and it comes up with that, it's quite cool.

Michelle & Temple, 31-35, US

I like that because you're not too daunted by the whole article. You can educate yourself and if there's gaps of information missing for you personally...

Because honestly, if you saw the whole article, this huge long thing, you might not read it.

## Chatbox conversation styles

Chloe, Victoria, Monica, 25-30 & 31-35, UK

The thing for me, if there's an article and then there's some visual, kind of, fun, quirky, additions, there's just, like, a fine line. Actually, the line isn't that fine. This is very different to the other article that was an actual article.

I think it also, it cheapens the content.

Yes, exactly. It cheapens it down too much.

I don't need the news to be my friend, basically.

It doesn't need to talk to me like, 'Hey, you know what's happening in India right now?' It can just be like, 'Hey, this is what's happening in India.'

## Instagram

Michelle & Temple, 31-35, US

I can post videos easily, I can keep up with my friends. It's easy to use. The stories allow you to slide through what you want to watch really quickly, or you can watch everyone's story. It's accessible.

## Instagram stories

Michelle & Temple, 31-35, US

Its nicely presented... very big visual... I mean, you could read about this after a couple of drinks and get through it just fine... Yes, it's, like, 'filling time' news.

## Conversational

Ryan, 18-20, US

It depends on the issue. There are some things that could be put in the first person and there are others that should not.

## Bullet point summaries

Michelle, 31-35, US

They have the bullet points and then they have the actual story. But then you're just re-reading them if the story's shorter, it's pretty much the bullet points with meat, you know, so, I don't need this. I really don't.

# Footnotes

- <sup>1)</sup> <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15205436.2016.1199705>
- <sup>2)</sup> [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/626087/IPOL\\_STU\(2018\)626087\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/626087/IPOL_STU(2018)626087_EN.pdf)
- <sup>3)</sup> <http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/bbc-fake-news-research-paper-nigeria-kenya.pdf>
- <sup>4)</sup> Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2019, <http://www.digitalnewsreport.org/>
- <sup>5)</sup> <http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/bbc-fake-news-research-paper-nigeria-kenya.pdf>
- <sup>6)</sup> Semiotic analysis looks at cultural artefacts such as media, advertising, packaging, art and other content groups them together based on aesthetic and then unpicks the socio-cultural meaning behind them
- <sup>7)</sup> <https://charlesduhigg.com/the-power-of-habit/>
- <sup>8)</sup> <http://philosophizethis.org/>
- <sup>9)</sup> <https://flamingogroup.com/case-studies-1/2019/4/29/efphbdwddc6yx3xnk7ryq1cbkwti0>
- <sup>10)</sup> <https://www.icpas.org/information/copy-desk/insight/article/digital-exclusive/generation-z-connected-creative-driven>
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- <sup>12)</sup> As used by the Reuters Institute in the Digital News Report 2019: [https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2019-06/DNR\\_2019\\_FINAL\\_1.pdf](https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2019-06/DNR_2019_FINAL_1.pdf)
- <sup>13)</sup> As used by the Reuters Institute in the Digital News Report 2019: [https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2019-06/DNR\\_2019\\_FINAL\\_1.pdf](https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2019-06/DNR_2019_FINAL_1.pdf)
- <sup>14)</sup> <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15205436.2016.1199705>
- <sup>15)</sup> See Appendix .3 for the mapping of each respondent
- <sup>16)</sup> <https://www.vox.com/2018/1/3/16845438/exercise-weight-loss-myth-burn-calories>
- <sup>17)</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/ampstories/moonmess/index.html>
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- <sup>19)</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/ng-interactive/2019/jan/11/the-internet-but-not-as-we-know-it-life-online-in-china-russia-cuba-and-india>
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- <sup>25)</sup> [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-32810887](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-32810887)
- <sup>26)</sup> [www.twitter.com/netflix](http://www.twitter.com/netflix)
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- <sup>30)</sup> [appitunes.apple.com/us/app/citizen/id1039889567?mt=8](https://appitunes.apple.com/us/app/citizen/id1039889567?mt=8)
- <sup>31)</sup> [www.theguardian.com/technology/ng-interactive/2019/jan/11/the-internet-but-not-as-we-know-it-life-online-in-china-russia-cuba-and-india](https://www.theguardian.com/technology/ng-interactive/2019/jan/11/the-internet-but-not-as-we-know-it-life-online-in-china-russia-cuba-and-india)
- <sup>32)</sup> [www.youtube.com/channel/UCNvslonJdJ5E4EXMa65VYpA](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNvslonJdJ5E4EXMa65VYpA)

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