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Press release

New report examines online news habits across Asia-Pacific region

A quarter of online users say social media is their main source of news in some parts of the Asia-Pacific region, according to a new report from the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.

The pilot study sees the RISJ extend its Digital News Report, the world's largest and most authoritative comparative report on digital news, to the APAC region for the first time this year.

Presenting detailed analysis of digital news and media use across Hong-Kong, Malaysia, Singapore and Taiwan, the new report extends the reach of the RISJ Digital News Report 2016. It allows for comparison of the four new markets with patterns across other APAC regions, including Japan, Australia and South Korea, and selected European and North American markets (the UK and the US) to highlight similar trends and key differences.

Some of the key findings from the new report include:

- Social media is key for how readers access news in these four markets. In Singapore and Malaysia, a quarter of respondents listed social media as the *main* source of news – far higher than the UK (8%) or US (15%)
- Several markets in the APAC region are significantly more technologically developed than their European and North American counterparts when it comes to the importance of digital news. Smartphones are relied upon, and the roles played by digital intermediaries including news aggregators, search engines and social media are key.
- Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia are all smartphone-first markets, where people say their smartphones are their *main* device for accessing news, over desktops and tablets. In Taiwan smartphones and desktops are equally popular. Mobile alerts via SMS and apps are more widely used as sources of news in most of these markets than other regions we previously studied.
- News media brands continue to be important in these markets, despite the rise in social media and mobile to access news. It is clear that the relationship between publishers and platforms does not need to be a zero-sum game.
- Across the markets covered, trust in news remains attached to news media brands rather than to individual journalists, and varies significantly; trust in news media is high in Hong Kong and Singapore, but much lower in Taiwan, and particularly Malaysia, where low levels of trust are akin to those in South Korea and the US.

Report co-author and RISJ Director of Research Rasmus Kleis Nielsen says: *“This study of several highly developed markets shows that the relationship between publishers and platforms does not need to be zero sum. In the markets we cover, social media and mobile media are more important than in most of North America and Western Europe, yet some publishers still have a strong position and direct connections with large parts of the audience. Mobile alerts and notifications seem to be key to maintaining this position in a changing environment.”*

The report's lead author, Kruakae Pothong, says: *"It is clear that one can no more generalise easily across the Asia-Pacific region than any other region; there are significant differences in how news media are used across the markets covered. Broadly speaking Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan have highly developed digital media markets with high reliance on mobile devices, a large role played by intermediaries, and strong news media online. Social media are widely used for accessing news and for commenting/sharing. Online news users in Malaysia report some of the same habits and preferences, but as internet use is lower there and our survey is an online poll, their behaviour is less representative of the wider population."*

"It is clear that while for example Japan has fewer people who proactively engage with, share, and comment on news online, there are more active participants in Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, and Taiwan than in most countries in North America and Western Europe," Pothong adds.

Download a copy of the report [here](#).

Editors' notes

About The Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism

The Thomson Reuters Foundation is the core funder of the RISJ, based in the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Oxford. The RISJ was launched in November 2006 and developed from the Reuters Fellowship Programme, established at Oxford 33 years ago. An international research centre in the comparative study of journalism, the RISJ aims to be global in its perspective and provides a leading forum for scholars from a wide range of disciplines to engage with journalists from around the world. See <http://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/>

About the authors

Dr Kruakae Pothong is a Research Fellow at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism and has led the research and analysis on this pilot study of four new Asia-Pacific markets (Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, and Taiwan). More generally, her work focuses on online news media consumption, users and young people's internet experience, internet and net neutrality policies, as well as the politics of the policymaking process concerning these issues. Forthcoming publications include *The Internet on Trial: How Children and Young People Deliberated about their Digital Rights* (with Stephen Coleman, Elvira Perez Valleios, and Ansgar Koene).

Dr Rasmus Kleis Nielsen is Director of Research at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism and Editor-in-Chief of the *International Journal of Press/ Politics*. His work focuses on changes in the news media, political communication, and the role of digital technologies in both. He has done extensive research on journalism, American politics, and various forms of activism, and a significant amount of comparative work in Western Europe and beyond. Recent books include *The Changing Business of Journalism and its Implications for Democracy* (2010, edited with David A. L. Levy), *Ground Wars: Personalized Communication in Political Campaigns* (2012), and *Political Journalism in Transition: Western Europe in a Comparative Perspective* (2014, edited with Raymond Kuhn).

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