



Reuters Institute
for the Study of Journalism

KANTAR MEDIA

Press release

Brand and trust in a fragmented news environment

Are digital and social media fuelling a more partisan, less rational political discourse? With more people relying on social media for news¹, both the Brexit result in the UK and the rise of Donald Trump in the US have raised concerns around the growth of echo chambers and the reliability and accuracy of news on social media - while trust in mainstream news is low in many countries.

The Reuters Institute today releases the results of qualitative research conducted earlier this year by Kantar Media, looking at issues of brand and trust in an increasingly fragmented distributed news environments, where aggregators and social media play a key role. The project covers four countries – Germany, Spain, the UK and US – with a series of pre-tasked discussion groups, allowing for detailed investigation into people’s digital news habits and preferences.

The research asks how people make sense of the plethora of providers and the cacophony of voices they face online. It explores the level of attribution that takes place on social media and aggregator websites and what drives trust within these distributed environments.

Key findings:

- Consumers’ trust in news is complex but is most readily associated with news content and, in particular, perceptions of its accuracy, impartiality, and tonality
- Trust was undermined where news content was perceived as having a sensationalist or overtly attention-grabbing tone
- Older users are more likely to favour website hubs while younger users are increasingly becoming aware of stories via social media. The vast majority of participants tended to have a preferred source for initial awareness of news stories and almost all gravitated towards online sources to learn about news stories.
- Social media is appreciated for its ease of access and the way it provides different perspectives but there are concerns about inaccurate information and unpleasant comments while social filtering risks creating a news bubble
- Views about editors vs algorithms were mixed, with the more digital savvy favouring the personalisation and perceived neutrality of algorithms, while others gravitate towards the familiarity and convenience of content selected by editors and journalists

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¹ Reuters Digital News report 2016 showed that 12% (average of 50,000 polled in 26 countries) say social media is now their main news source. Trust in the news in general ranges from 65% in Finland to just 33% in the US and 20% in Greece.

Editors' notes

Methodology

Eight discussion groups lasting two hours each were conducted across four countries: Germany, Spain, the UK and United States. Each group comprised up to 8 participants, with 'younger' (aged 20-34) and 'older' (35-54) sessions conducted in each country. The research was conducted in February 2016. The research and full report can also be found at www.digitalnewsreport.org/publications/ from 11th October. The report includes a fuller description of the methodology with the complete discussion guide.

Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism

The Thomson Reuters Foundation is the core funder of the Reuters Institute, based in the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Oxford. The Institute was launched in November 2006 and developed from the Reuters Fellowship Programme, established at Oxford 33 years ago. The Institute, an international research centre in the comparative study of journalism, 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/>

Kantar Media

Kantar Media is a global leader in media intelligence, providing clients with the data they need to make informed decisions on all aspects of media measurement, monitoring and selection. Part of Kantar, the data investment management arm of WPP, Kantar Media provides the most comprehensive and accurate intelligence on media consumption, performance and value. For further information, see: www.kantarmedia.com

The Digital News Project

The Digital News Project marks an expansion of the Digital News Report into a full-scale series of research pieces, thanks to the support of Google via the Digital News Initiative. Eight new reports will be released in 2016. The new series builds on the success of the Digital News Report as the world's largest comparative international survey of changing news habits, and will continue to track the transition of the news industry towards an increasingly digital and multi-platform future. 2016 sees an expanded team of researchers, sponsors and collaborators explore trends and developments across 26 countries.

Increased support from Google, co-sponsors of the initiative since 2013, has allowed the Institute to extend the report's coverage of Europe to 20 countries in 2016. The new countries included are Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey. These are added to the countries covered in the 2015 report; UK, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Ireland, Spain, Australia, Brazil, Japan and the US.

Other sponsors for the Digital News Report 2016 are: the BBC, the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, Edelman UK, Media Industry Research Foundation of Finland, Hans-Bredow-Institut, Korea Press Foundation, Laval University, The University of Navarra, Ofcom, the University of Canberra and the Fritt Ord Foundation.

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