

Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2017

Asia-Pacific Supplementary Report



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Contents

METHODOLOGY	5
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	7
1 How do People Consume Online News?	9
2 News Engagement on Social Media	16
3 News Participation	18
4 Receiving News Beyond Needs and Interests	20
5 Are People Paying for Online News?	21
6 News Avoidance	26
7 News Trustworthiness and Perceptions of Media Independence	28
8 Conclusions	30
REFERENCES	33

Methodology










This report has been produced in collaboration between the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at the University of Oxford. It is based on data from a survey commissioned by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism and supported by a range of partners and sponsors to understand how news is being consumed in seven countries. Asia-Pacific partners include the University of Canberra and the Korea Press Foundation. Survey work in other Asia-Pacific markets in the report was done with the support of the Google Digital News Initiative as well as with wider support from BBC News and Ofcom. A full list of partners and sponsors can be found in the main 2017 *Digital News Report*. Research was conducted by YouGov using an online questionnaire at the end of January/beginning of February 2017.

The data were weighted to targets based on census/industry accepted data, such as age, gender, region, newspaper readership, and social grade, to represent the total population of each country. The sample is reflective of the population that has access to the internet.

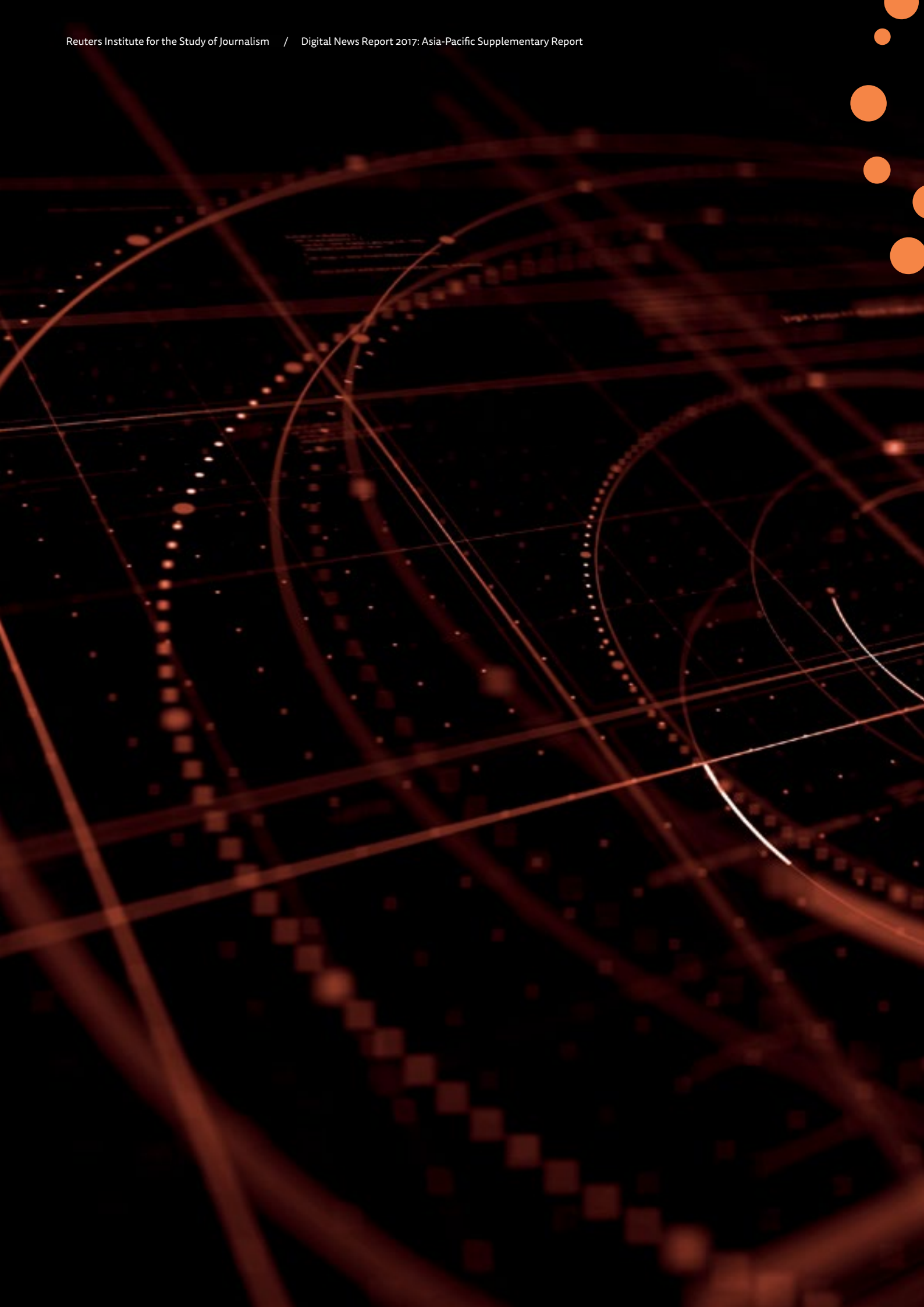
As this survey deals with news consumption, we filtered out anyone who said that they had not consumed any news in the past month, in order to ensure that irrelevant responses didn't adversely affect data quality. This category averaged around 3%. A comprehensive online questionnaire was designed to capture all aspects of news consumption.

Our survey was conducted using established online panels run by our polling company YouGov and their partners. Because this is an online survey the results will under-represent the consumption habits of people who are not online (typically older, less affluent, and with limited formal education). Where relevant, we have tried to make this clear within the text. The main purpose is to track the activities and changes over time within the digital space – as well as gaining understanding about how offline media and online media are used together.

Along with country-based figures, throughout the report we also use aggregate figures based on responses from all respondents across all the countries covered. These figures are meant only to indicate overall tendencies and should be treated with caution. The analysis represents the work of the authors and not of any other sponsor or partner.

Country	Final sample size	Total population	Internet penetration
 Hong Kong	2,015	7.4m	82%
 Taiwan	1,017	23m	88%
 Singapore	2,000	5.7m	81%
 Japan	2,000	126m	94%
 South Korea	2,002	51m	89%
 Malaysia	2,108	31m	70%
 Australia	2,004	23m	92%
 USA	2,269	324m	90%
 UK	2,112	65m	92%

Source: Internet World Stats <http://www.internetworldstats.com> internet population estimate 2017.



Executive Summary

This report presents an analysis of data from a survey of online news users in seven markets in the Asia-Pacific region: Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, Japan, South Korea, and Australia. It is based on data from the 2017 *Reuters Institute Digital News Report* but the regional focus provides more detailed analysis of developments across Asia-Pacific markets.

To shed light both on similarities and differences within the region and between the region and more global trends, we include the UK and the US in the analysis as benchmarks. We focus on Asia-Pacific markets here in part because it is important to understand the specificities of how media and news use is developing across the region, and in part because the region – with several technically highly developed markets with young populations – provides a possible indication of what the future of digital media holds for less-developed markets with older populations elsewhere. Digital media use in many Asia-Pacific markets is more developed than in many other high-income countries in, for example, Europe and North America.

In the report, we show how most markets in the region are deeply shaped by the spread of smartphones and the rise of platforms, but also characterised by some publishers who maintain a strong direct connection with their users.

KEY FINDINGS INCLUDE:

- Online platforms, with social media included, have become the most widely used and important source of news in most countries in the region, surpassing television and print. Japan constitutes the sole exception. (Lower internet penetration in Malaysia means results there cannot necessarily be generalised to the population as a whole.)
- Five markets in the region are 'smartphone first', as the proportions of respondents choosing smartphones as their main device for accessing online news surpass the proportions using computers as their main device. Australia and Japan are the exceptions.
- Direct access to news websites or news organisations' apps, search engines, and social media are the three most important ways for people to access online news. Japan and South Korea are the exceptions, where search and aggregators are the most important ways of accessing online news.
- In all markets, people consume online news in a large variety of ways, ranging from following a live news page within a website to watching online news videos. Despite increased investment in video from both platforms and publishers, most respondents in most surveyed markets indicated that they mostly read news in text. In many of the markets surveyed, there are also no significant differences between age groups in preferences for text or video.
- Social media are very widely used for news, especially in Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, and Taiwan. In these markets, about half of those who used social media for news think of Facebook as a useful way of getting news (instead of seeing news when being on Facebook for other reasons).
- Despite the wide use of social media and the opportunities most of these platforms provide users to manage what kind of news they see, in all markets surveyed, respondents reported not being particularly active in curating news for themselves. Respondents also exhibited relatively low levels of news participation (e.g. sharing news stories, commenting on news stories).
- Except in South Korea and Australia, responses suggest respondents in most markets in the region are less likely than respondents in the UK and the US to see a diverse range of news content. The discrepancies exist regardless of whether the respondents used social media, search engines, or news aggregators to access online news.
- Most respondents in the region are not paying for the online news they are consuming. The percentages of payers are nonetheless comparable with those in the US and higher than that in the UK.
 - *When asked why they pay for news, the convenience of being able to access content via smartphone or tablet is the only reason that stands out. The percentages of people saying that they pay for online news in order to help fund journalism are relatively small.*
 - *When those who do not pay for online news are asked why they do not pay, the main reason cited is the fact that people feel they can already get what they need for free (or that online news is not worth paying for), frequently because people's favourite news source doesn't currently charge for access.*
- Substantial proportions of respondents in most of the surveyed markets say they at least occasionally try to avoid news, even though the percentages are often lower than those in the US. People who try to avoid the news are less interested in the news only in some of the countries. In most of the survey markets, 'it can have a negative effect on my mood' is the most frequently cited reason for avoiding news. But in South Korea, 'it leads to arguments I'd rather avoid' is the most important reason to avoid news. In Malaysia, the most frequently cited reason is 'I can't rely on news to be true'.
- Finally, the analysis shows that, in six of the seven Asia-Pacific markets surveyed here, more respondents trust the news than distrust the news. South Korea is the sole exception, whereas the proportion of respondents trusting the news just surpasses the proportion of respondents distrusting the news in Malaysia. In all surveyed markets, younger people find news less trustworthy. Levels of trust do not seem directly related to external assessments of media freedom.
- Except in Australia and Japan, respondents in the Asia-Pacific markets perceive their news media as being subjected to undue political or government influence. Except in Japan and Singapore, respondents in the Asia-Pacific markets perceive their news media as being subjected to undue commercial influence. Perceptions of undue political and/or commercial influence do not seem directly related to external assessments of media freedom.

After presenting the analysis and findings, we will further discuss some of the regional specificities and internal variations among the Asia-Pacific markets. Short country profiles of the markets covered as well as further analysis and information about the US, the UK, and other markets, as well as the main *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2017*, are available on the project website, www.digitalnewsreport.org. This report builds on our 2016 pilot study of the markets covered here, but is the first time we field the full *Digital News Report* survey in the region.¹

¹ Pothong and Nielsen (2016).

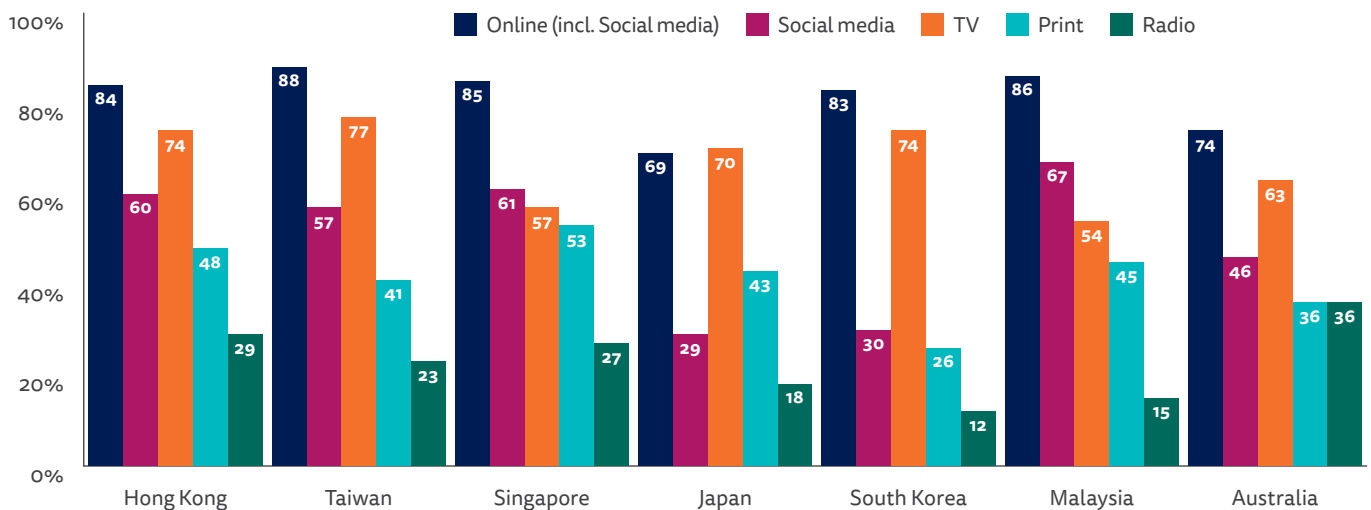
1. How do People Consume Online News?

ONLINE MEDIA AS MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS

For internet users across the Asia-Pacific region, online media are now the most widely used and most important source of news. Nowadays, people can acquire news from a variety of online platforms, including news websites, news apps, social media, and blogs. In markets such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and South Korea, more than 80% of respondents named online media (including social media) as sources of news. In Australia, more than 70% did so. These figures are comparable with those in the US and the UK.

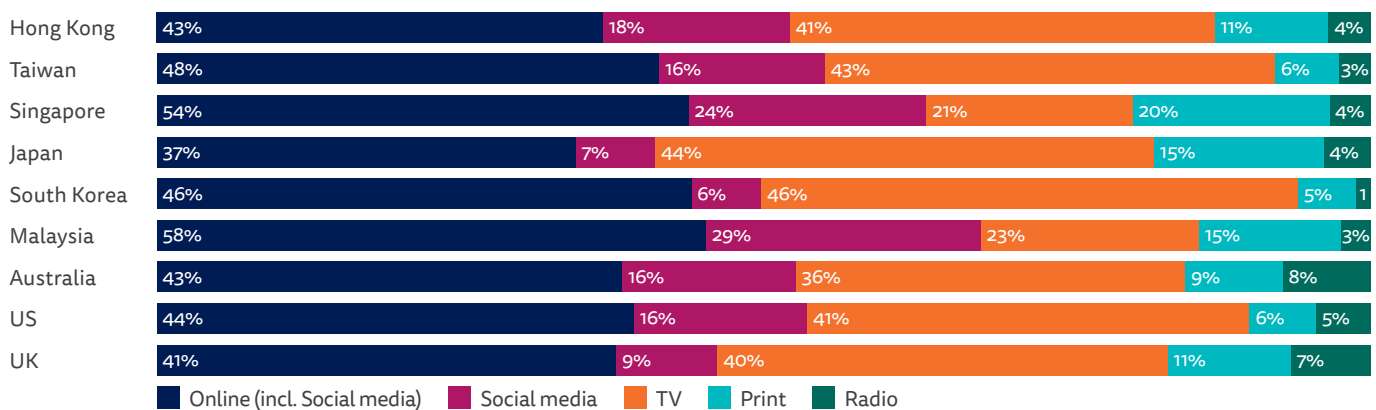
In Singapore and Malaysia, social media considered alone have overtaken television as a source of news. Across all countries, radio and print media are less significant than both online media and television as news sources. Online media are also widely named as the *main* source of news. Japan is the only exception, where television is the main source of news.

SOURCES OF NEWS BY COUNTRY



Q3. Which, if any, of the following have you used in the last week as a source of news? Please select all that apply. Base: Total sample in each country. Note: Data does not add up to 100% because the small proportion who selected another source as their source of news are not shown.

MAIN SOURCES OF NEWS BY COUNTRY



Q4. You say you've used these sources in the last week, which would you say is your main source of news? Base: All who have used at least one source of news in the last week (Hong Kong=1999, Taiwan=1007, Singapore=1961, Japan=1901, South Korea=1942, Malaysia=2056, Australia=1914, US=2166, UK=2032). Note: Data does not add up to 100% because the small proportion who selected another source as their main source of news are not shown.

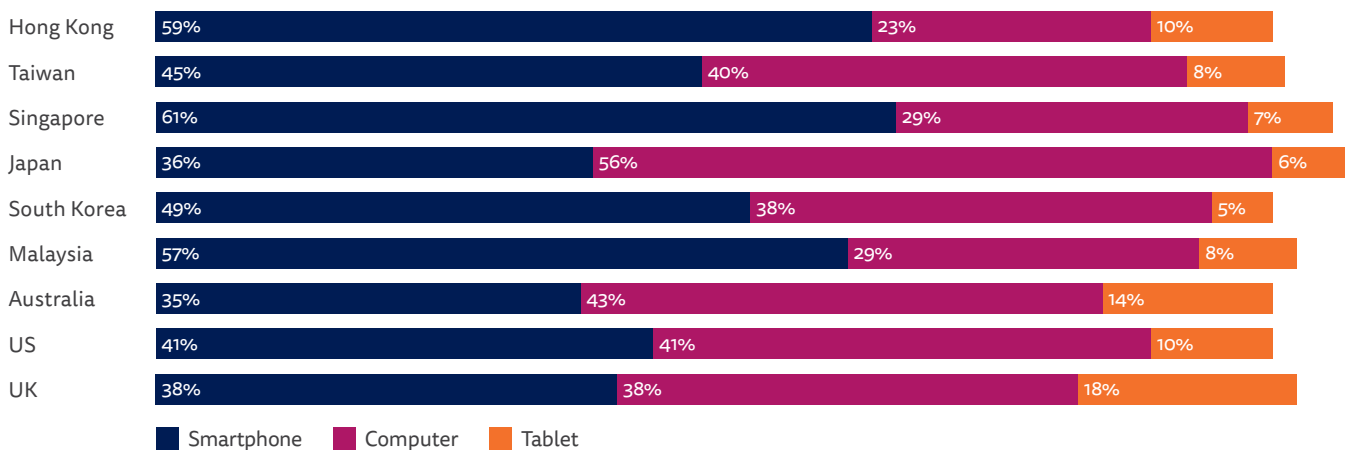
SMARTPHONE-FIRST MARKETS

Our research confirms that several Asia-Pacific markets are among the world leaders in smartphone adoption and have highly mobile-centred media environments. The relatively sophisticated digital infrastructure and higher penetration rates of smartphone and mobile broadband in the region have facilitated the widespread use of smartphones for news.² Our 2017 survey data confirm that Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, and Malaysia are all smartphone-first markets, with more people using smartphones as the main device for accessing online news than are using computers and tablets. In Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia, such percentages have reached or approached 60%. In South Korea, close to half of the respondents use smartphones as the main device for news. While in last year's Taiwan figures, the percentage using smartphones as the main device for news (43%) was slightly less than that of computer use (45%), it has become a smartphone-first market this year.³

These levels of smartphone use for news are much higher than the figures in some developed markets in North America and Western Europe. In the US and the UK, for example, smartphone use for news is high, standing at around 40%, but is tied with computer use. Only a few other markets, mostly in the Nordic countries, have comparable levels of smartphone use.⁴ However, not all markets in the Asia-Pacific region are equally mobile-centred. In Japan and Australia, more respondents name computers as the main device for accessing online news than name smartphones.

Across all the Asia-Pacific markets we cover, we find comparatively low levels of tablet use. There are only about 10% or less of respondents in the region who use tablets as their main device to access online news, which is on par with the US (10%), but lower than that of the UK (18%).

MAIN DEVICE FOR ACCESSING ONLINE NEWS BY COUNTRY



UK&6 5. You've said you use the following devices to access news in the last week, which is your main way of accessing online news? Base: All who use any device for news (Hong Kong=1744, Taiwan=908, Singapore=1788, Japan=1695, South Korea=1760, Malaysia=1776, Australia=1615, US=1909, UK=1705). Note: Data for each country do not add up to 100% because the small proportion who selected another digital device as their main device for news is not shown.

Every technology has a diffusion process. When a new technology is introduced to society, some segments of the population will adopt it first before others. In our analysis, we categorise the respondents into three age groups: 18–29, 30–45, and 46 or above. The first group consists of what some have called 'digital natives', people who were born and grew up after digital technology and internet connectivity became commonplace in high-income countries from the mid to late 1990s.⁵ In contrast, those aged 30–45 and aged 46 or above are often considered 'digital migrants', who have encountered and embraced digital media as a supplement to media habits and preferences shaped in a largely pre-digital media environment. Those between 30 and 45 are here a middle group – people who came of age as digital media spread rapidly. Many of them are likely to have been among the 'early adopters' of internet technologies in the early 1990s. Due to their different life experiences, various age groups may exhibit differences in technology adoption.

Not surprisingly, our data show that young people overwhelmingly use smartphones as their main device for news, whereas older people rely more on computers. With regard to smartphone use, in nearly all Asia-Pacific markets (except Singapore), young people aged 18–29 are the most avid smartphone users. The same pattern is also found in the US and the UK. The generational divide in smartphone use between this young age group and older age groups (those aged 30–45 and 46 or above) are bigger in Japan, Australia, the UK, and the US. In Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan, and South Korea, smartphone use is so prevalent that even many members of the two older age groups name it as the main device for news.

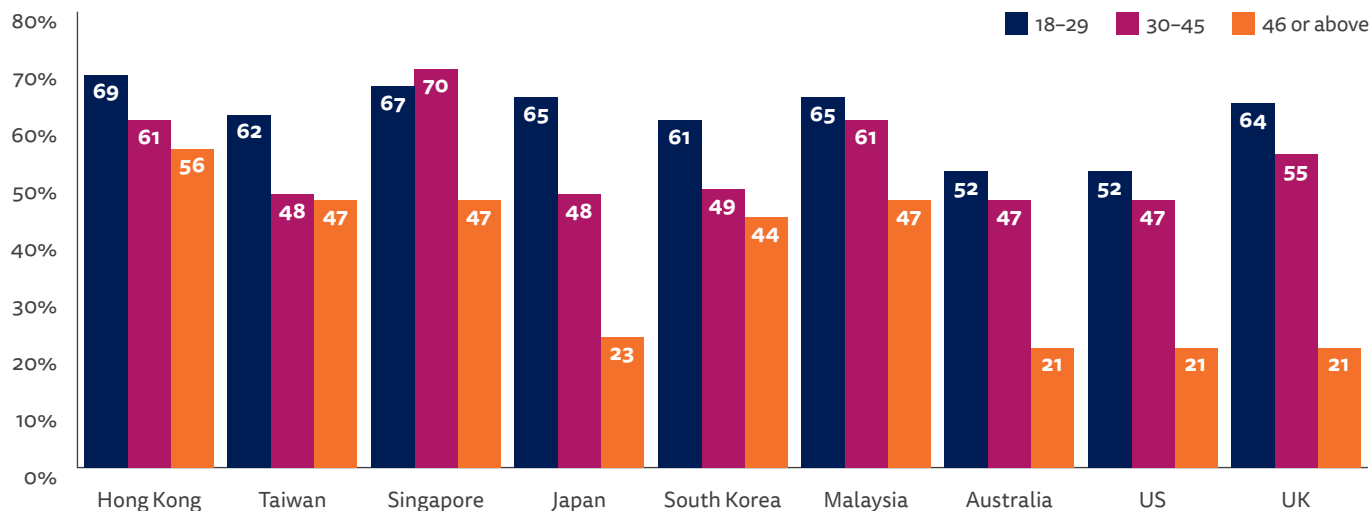
² See Pothong and Nielsen 2016: 8.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Newman et al. 2017.

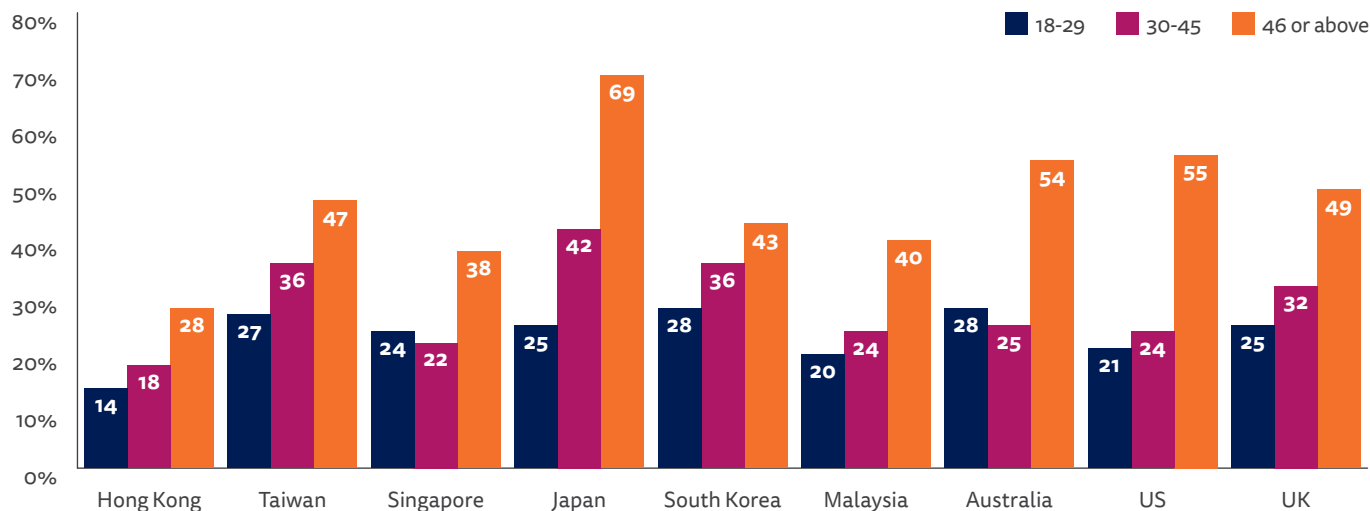
⁵ See Palfrey and Gasser 2008.

SMARTPHONE AS THE MAIN DEVICE BY AGE



UK8b6 5. You've said you use the following devices to access news in the last week, which is your main way of accessing online news? Base (18-29): Hong Kong=291, Taiwan=180, Singapore=518, Japan=243, South Korea=335, Malaysia=528, Australia=332, US=405, UK=283. Base (30-45): Hong Kong=497, Taiwan=275, Singapore=607, Japan=435, South Korea=526, Malaysia=600, Australia=492, US=549, UK=506. Base (46 or above): Hong Kong=956, Taiwan=456, Singapore=666, Japan=1017, South Korea=899, Malaysia=651, Australia=792, US=955, UK=917.

COMPUTER AS THE MAIN DEVICE BY AGE



UK8b6 5. You've said you use the following devices to access news in the last week, which is your main way of accessing online news? Base (18-29): Hong Kong=291, Taiwan=180, Singapore=518, Japan=243, South Korea=335, Malaysia=528, Australia=332, US=405, UK=283. Base (30-45): Hong Kong=497, Taiwan=275, Singapore=607, Japan=435, South Korea=526, Malaysia=600, Australia=492, US=549, UK=506. Base (46 or above): Hong Kong=956, Taiwan=456, Singapore=666, Japan=1017, South Korea=899, Malaysia=651, Australia=792, US=955, UK=917.

Although the people aged 30-45 and those aged 46 or above are both 'digital migrants', they are by no means the same. As our data reveal, across all the countries the 30-45 age group has a higher level of smartphone adoption than those aged 46 or above. Yet the sizes of the gap between the two varies in different countries.

As noted in our 2016 pilot study of the region, a country's demographics can have substantive impact on the diffusion and adoption of new forms of media among the population. The Asia-Pacific markets covered here generally have younger populations than many Western countries, and they have therefore witnessed a faster transition to a digitally advanced and mobile society.⁶ Japan is an anomaly among the Asia-Pacific markets. As will be discussed in subsequent sections, Japan is very different from other Asia-Pacific markets in other aspects as well.

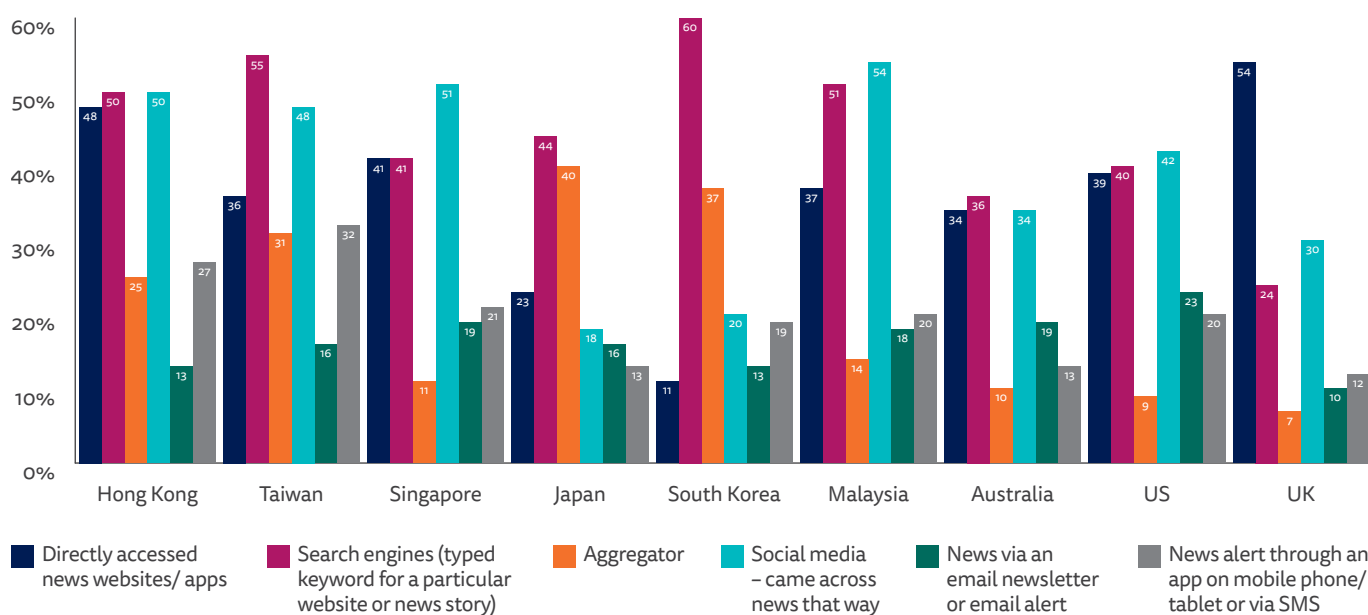
⁶ See Pothong and Nielsen 2016: 10.

BRANDS, SEARCH ENGINE, AND SOCIAL MEDIA AS IMPORTANT GATEWAYS

In recent years, traditional forms of 'direct discovery', where news users go directly to the broadcast, print, or digital offerings of publishers to find and access news, have increasingly been supplemented by more widespread reliance on forms of 'distributed discovery', where news is found and accessed via platform services including search engines, social media, aggregators, and the like. This development presents media users with new ways of using news that many, especially younger people, have embraced. It simultaneously presents publishers with both challenges and opportunities – platform services provide ways of reaching far wider online audiences than most publishers could ever hope to do solely through their own apps, websites, etc., but they also mean that news organisations increasingly rely on 'digital intermediaries' for reaching online audiences.⁷

Our data show clearly that this development is very pronounced across the Asia-Pacific markets covered here. In most markets, large numbers of online news users report going direct to the websites and apps of news organisations for online news, but many also – or instead – rely on intermediaries, most importantly search engines and social media. Comparisons with key markets in North America and Western Europe as well as across the Asia-Pacific region are instructive. In Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and Malaysia alike, we see high numbers of people relying on search engines and especially social media for news, but, importantly, large numbers of people still go direct to news websites and apps, in many cases more than do so in, for example, the United States. This suggests that the relationship between platforms and publishers may not be the kind of zero-sum game some news organisations fear.⁸

WAYS OF ACCESSING ONLINE NEWS BY COUNTRY



YQ10. Thinking about how you got news online (via computer, mobile or any device) in the last week, which were the ways in which you came across news stories? Please select all that apply.
Base: Total sample in each country. Note: Some of the data does not round up to 100%.

Interestingly, direct access to news websites/apps and the use of social media for news are rather rare in Japan and South Korea, which only account for about 20% or less. In both countries, the use of aggregators for news (about 40%) is more prevalent than these two channels. In fact, news aggregators are most popular in Japan and South Korea among all countries covered here, reflecting the early growth of portals like Yahoo Japan and Naver who continue to play a central role in these markets.

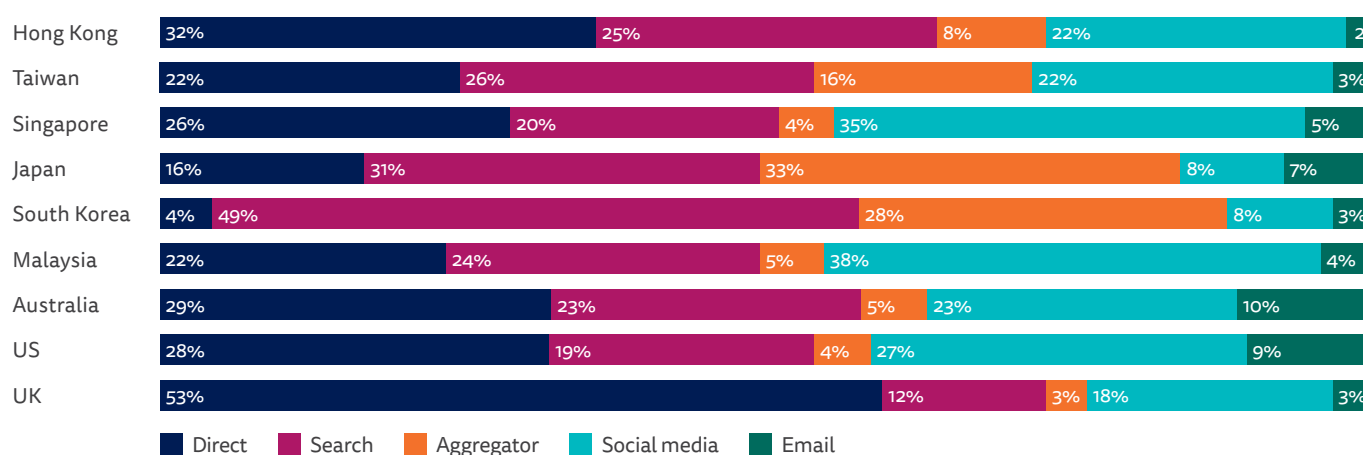
⁷ Bell et al. 2017; Nielsen and Ganter 2017.

⁸ Our 2016 pilot study found a similar combination of widely used platforms and still-strong publishers, see Pothong and Nielsen 2016.

Compared with direct access, search, and social media, email newsletters and/or mobile alerts are less widely used to get news. Across all countries, the usage of these various news channels is low (ranging generally from about 10% to 20%). However, these figures are frequently significantly higher than are found in many North American and Western European markets.

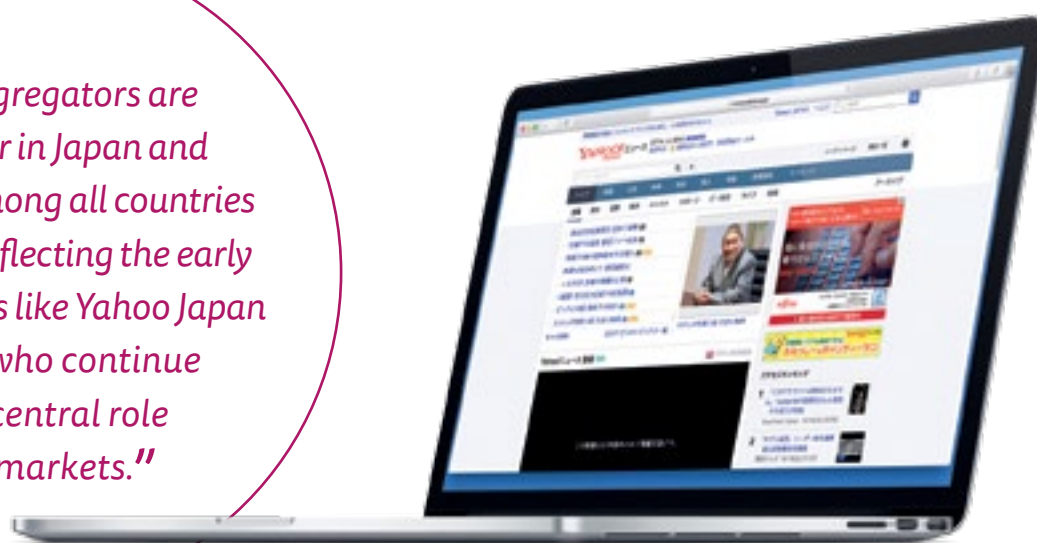
As there are various ways of accessing news online, which are the most important gateways to news? For the internet users who have come across news online, our survey asked them to identify the main way of accessing online news. The overall pattern of answers remains basically the same as above: direct access to branded news websites/apps, search engine, and social media are the main gateways to online news in all places except South Korea and Japan, where news aggregators serve as a main gateway to online news instead of social media and direct access to news websites or apps.

MAIN WAY OF ACCESSING NEWS BY COUNTRY



Q10a_new2017. Which of these was the main way in which you came across news in the last week? Base: All who come across news online (Hong Kong=1936, Taiwan=979, Singapore=1891, Japan=1793, South Korea=1876, Malaysia=1921, US=2010, UK=1822, Australia=1745). Note: Some of the data does not round up to 100%.

"...news aggregators are most popular in Japan and South Korea among all countries covered here, reflecting the early growth of portals like Yahoo Japan and Naver who continue to play a central role in these markets."



READING STORIES, LOOKING AT HEADLINES, WATCHING VIDEOS, AND USING 'APPS'


In addition to different forms of discovery, our survey also covers different forms of consumption. Despite a heavy emphasis on video from both publishers and platform companies, reading news stories or articles is the most widely reported mode of consumption. This is the most common in all covered markets here, except Hong Kong and Taiwan. South Korea leads all other markets, as more than half of its respondents read news stories. Japan, Australia, the US, and the UK also have more than 40% of such respondents.

Looking at a list of news headlines is the second most widely reported mode of consumption. The percentages for this option are more than 30% in all countries – and close to 40% in South Korea – except Hong Kong. Other relatively more popular modes of consumption include using smartphone apps to access news and watching online news videos.

It is worth noting that, as mentioned earlier, the use of smartphones for news is more prevalent in Asia-Pacific markets than in the US and the UK. Therefore, our data show that using smartphone apps to access news is also more common in Asia-Pacific markets.

Some consumption modes are generally less common but are notable in certain markets. For instance, in Hong Kong and Taiwan, about 30% of respondents 'follow a live news page within a website'. The figure is much higher than that in other countries. Moreover, Hong Kong respondents are specifically interested in viewing news graphics, whereas Taiwan respondents particularly like looking at news lists. As with the use of email newsletters and mobile alerts, live pages, apps, and video have not yet been embraced by a majority of online news users, but the number of people who say they have used these are in many cases higher in the Asia-Pacific markets we cover here than in many markets in North America and Western Europe, reflecting markets with younger, mobile-centred, and more digitally native audiences.

WAYS OF CONSUMING ONLINE NEWS BY COUNTRY

	Hong Kong	Taiwan	Singapore	Japan	South Korea	Malaysia	Australia	US	UK
									
Follow a live news page within a website	29%	34%	12%	10%	7%	21%	13%	14%	10%
Read a news blog	9%	9%	12%	9%	16%	18%	11%	15%	7%
Look at a sequence or gallery of pictures about news	16%	12%	13%	17%	16%	16%	13%	16%	12%
View a news graphic	25%	8%	11%	3%	8%	14%	7%	12%	6%
Watch an online news video	33%	31%	24%	12%	16%	23%	25%	29%	20%
Look at a list of news headlines	25%	34%	31%	35%	38%	31%	31%	32%	31%
Read news stories or articles	31%	25%	39%	48%	54%	32%	42%	46%	45%
Listen to news audio online	18%	13%	12%	9%	7%	13%	11%	14%	8%
Look at a news list	15%	26%	11%	15%	17%	13%	9%	9%	8%
Use an 'app' on smartphone to access the news	33%	32%	26%	20%	30%	24%	16%	21%	20%
Use an 'app' on tablet to access the news	19%	14%	14%	7%	7%	15%	12%	12%	13%

Q11. Thinking of the way you looked at news online (via any device) in the last week, which of the following ways of consuming news did you use? Please select all that apply. Base: Total sample in each country. Note: The small proportion who selected 'Other', 'Don't know' and 'None of these' is not shown.

TEXT STORIES VERSUS VIDEO NEWS

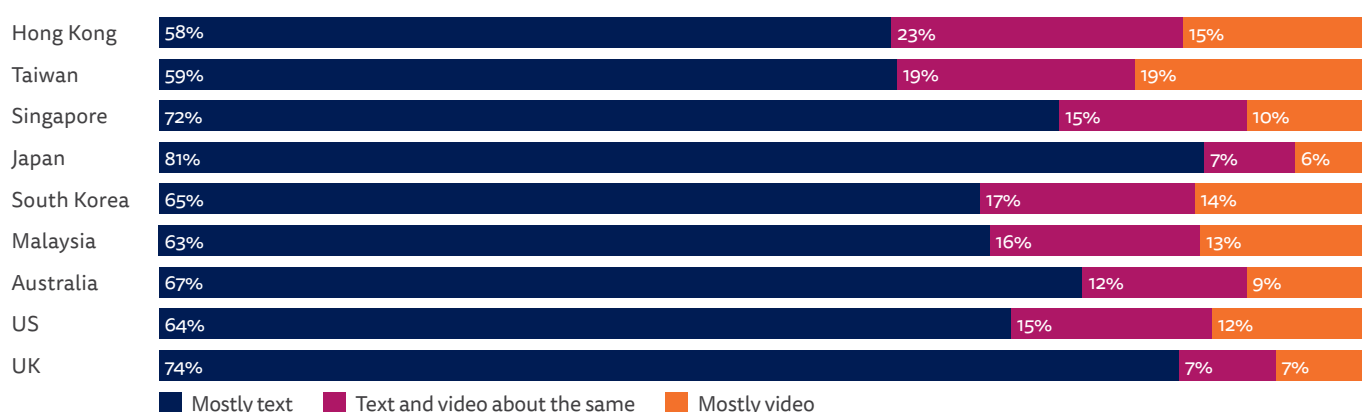
Digitisation allows the combination of text, audio, video, graphic, animation, and interactive features in news representation. With such possibilities and options, would news users abandon the traditional text format of news and turn to watching video news primarily?

We find that the majority of online news users in most countries consume a mix of text stories and video news. In Hong Kong and Taiwan, more than 70% of the respondents consume a combination of text stories and video news regularly. The percentages in Singapore and Korea are higher than 60%. Among these 'hybrid news users', a larger portion (30–40%) of them 'mostly read text and watch video news occasionally', much more than those who do the opposite.

The second-largest group of online news users is 'text-only users'. Across all markets, substantial numbers of respondents suggest that they 'mostly read news in text', though the numbers vary greatly in different places. Whereas Japan and the UK have more than 40% of text-only users, the numbers are lowest in Hong Kong and Taiwan (between 15% and 18%).

Despite an increasing emphasis on video from many publishers and platform companies, only about 5% or less of respondents say that they 'mostly watch video news'.

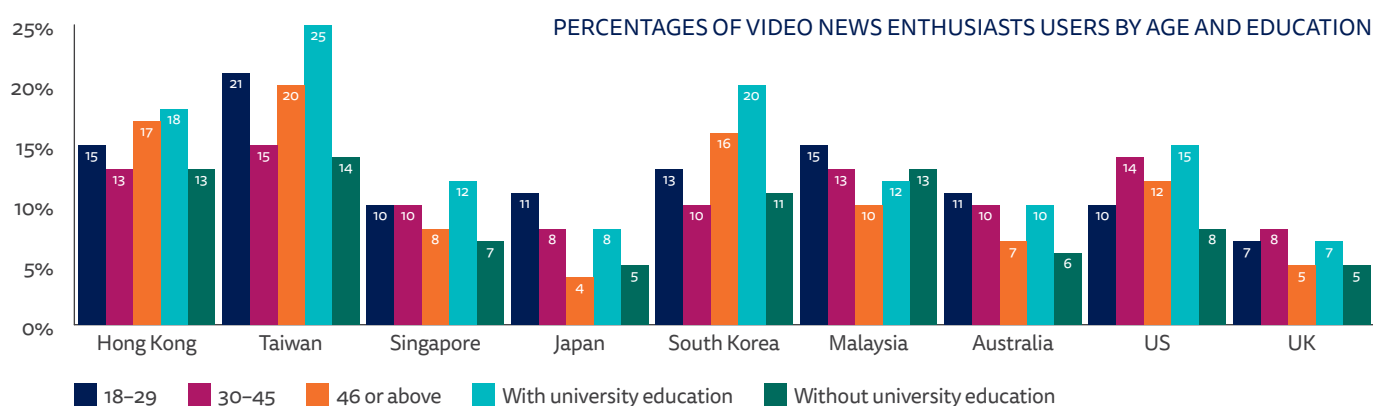
PREFERENCE FOR ONLINE NEWS VIDEO OR TEXT BY COUNTRY



OPTQ11D. In thinking about your online news habits, which of the following statements applies best to you? Please select one. Base: Total sample in each country. Note: The small proportion who selected 'Don't know' is not shown.

Research has found that digital news video has become increasingly popular in recent years.⁹ It is worthwhile to examine who the video news enthusiasts (i.e. those who 'mostly watch video news' and 'mostly watch video news and read text occasionally') are. We find that many of them have higher educational levels (i.e. with university education), except for the video news users in Malaysia.

However, the age pattern varies across countries. While in Singapore, Japan, Malaysia, Australia, and the UK, video news enthusiasts tend to be younger, the results in other countries suggest different patterns.



OPTQ11D. In thinking about your online news habits, which of the following statements applies best to you? Please select one. Percentages refer to those who selected 'mostly watch video news and read text occasionally' or 'mostly watch video news'. Base (18–29): Hong Kong=321, Taiwan=203, Singapore=581, Japan=273, South Korea=392, Malaysia=619, US=504, UK=353, Australia=407. Base (30–45): Hong Kong=568, Taiwan=312, Singapore=672, Japan=507, South Korea=583, Malaysia=705, US=630, UK=597, Australia=576. Base (46 or above): Hong Kong=1125, Taiwan=502, Singapore=748, Japan=1221, South Korea=1027, Malaysia=784, US=1126, UK=1162, Australia=1021. Base (with university education): Hong Kong=878, Taiwan=608, Singapore=1004, Japan=1047, South Korea=1335, Malaysia=938, US=752, UK=733, Australia=778. Base (without university education): Hong Kong=1135, Taiwan=406, Singapore=980, Japan=951, South Korea=662, Malaysia=1163, US=1503, UK=1376, Australia=1222.

⁹ Kalogeropoulos and Newman 2016; Kenneth Olmstead, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/04/17/five-findings-about-digital-video-news/>

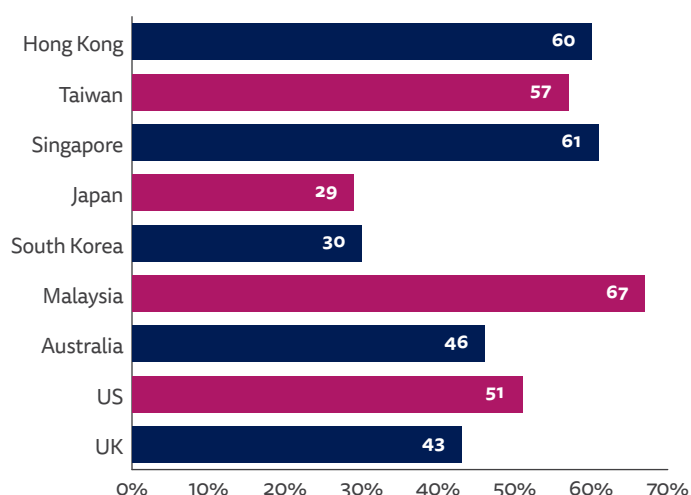
2. News Engagement on Social Media

SOCIAL MEDIA USE IS PERVASIVE

Due to the successful uptake of new communication technologies, many Asia-Pacific markets have become digitally advanced and connected societies. One indicator is the high level of social media adoption. The absolute majority of our respondents use different kinds of social media platforms in one way or another. The usage rate is close to 100% in Hong Kong (98%), Singapore (98%), Taiwan (97%), and Malaysia (98%). There are close to 90% of social media users in the Australian and South Korean samples, which are on par with the US (91%) and ahead of the UK (84%). Japan has the lowest usage rate, but it is still over 75%.

In recent years, social media have become increasingly important as digital intermediaries as more people access news information through social media rather than directly from branded news organisations.¹⁰ Social media users can use the platform for reading, watching, sharing, and discussing news. Our data illustrate that these kinds of news engagement on social media vary greatly across countries. Social media users in Malaysia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore are the most active. About 80–90% of them have used social media for news. South Korea, Australia, and the US occupy a middle position, where about 60–70% of respondents have used social media for reading, watching, sharing, or discussing news. Similar to some of the findings presented earlier, the Japanese respondents have lower levels of social media use for news. The UK ranks last in the countries included in this report. Generally speaking, the usage of social media for news is more prevalent in Asia-Pacific than in the US and the UK.

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR NEWS BY COUNTRY



Q3. Which, if any, of the following have you used in the last week as a source of news? Please select all that apply (showing Social media). Base: Total sample in each country.

USING FACEBOOK FOR NEWS PURPOSELY OR INCIDENTALLY?

There are many prominent social media platforms in the world. But here we focus on Facebook for further analysis because its use is widespread in the Asia-Pacific region. By the first half of 2017, the number of Facebook users in this region accounted for about one-third of the company's overall user population (the company reports more monthly active users in Asia-Pacific than in Europe and North America combined).¹¹ By looking at the Facebook usage of Asia-Pacific online news users we can better understand their news engagement on social media.

Because Facebook serves as a platform where ever more publishers (as well as others including ordinary users, activists, and political organisations) post news and information, one intriguing question is how users may receive news information on this content-rich platform. Facebook users may come across news in two ways: they can actively seek news on the platform, or they may incidentally stumble across news when they are surfing the platform for other purposes.

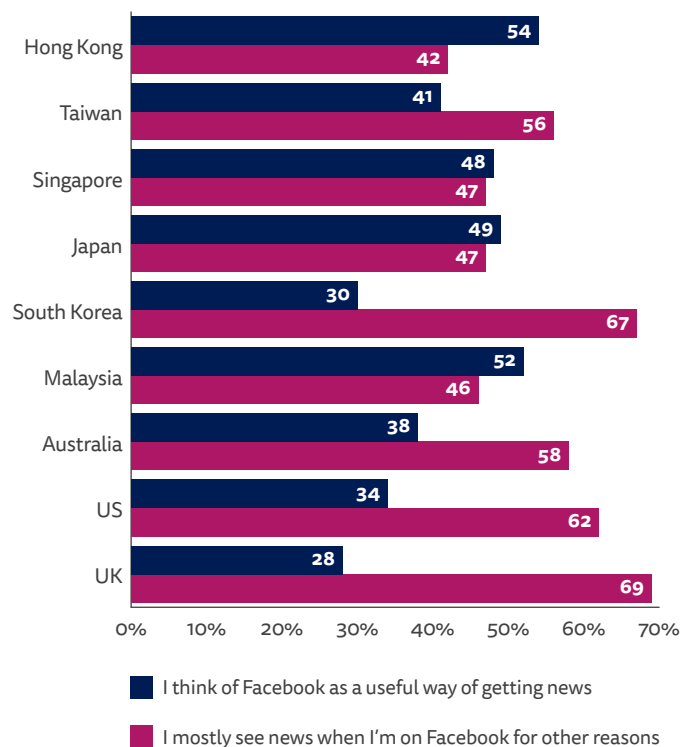
Our data illustrate that a large portion of Facebook users in Asia-Pacific are mainly incidentally exposed to news on Facebook. Over 50% of the respondents in Taiwan and Australia and about 70% of the respondents in South Korea say that they see news when they are 'on Facebook for other reasons'. In contrast, respondents in Hong Kong and Malaysia have a stronger intention of actively using Facebook for news consumption. In both places, over half of the Facebook users 'think of Facebook as a useful way of getting news' (54% and 52% respectively). But the percentages of those who see news when 'on Facebook for other reasons' are up to more than 40%. In Singapore and Japan, Facebook users are more or less evenly split between the two modes of news reception. These findings suggest that, although social media may not be 'pure' news platforms, they have the ability to extend the reach of news to those who do not actively seek news. In this sense, many social media users are 'pushed' to learn about news events and issues. Contrary to fears of filter bubbles, our data confirm that social media serve as a powerful engine for 'incidental exposure' to news, where people come across news and information in the process of using these platforms for other purposes.¹² This illustrates the potential power of social media in shaping people's current affairs knowledge and public opinion at large.

¹⁰ See e.g. Bell et al. 2017; Nielsen and Ganter 2017.

¹¹ <https://investor.fb.com/investor-events/event-details/2017/Facebook-Q1-2017-Earnings/default.aspx>

¹² See e.g. Fletcher and Nielsen 2017a.

COMING ACROSS NEWS ON FACEBOOK BY COUNTRY

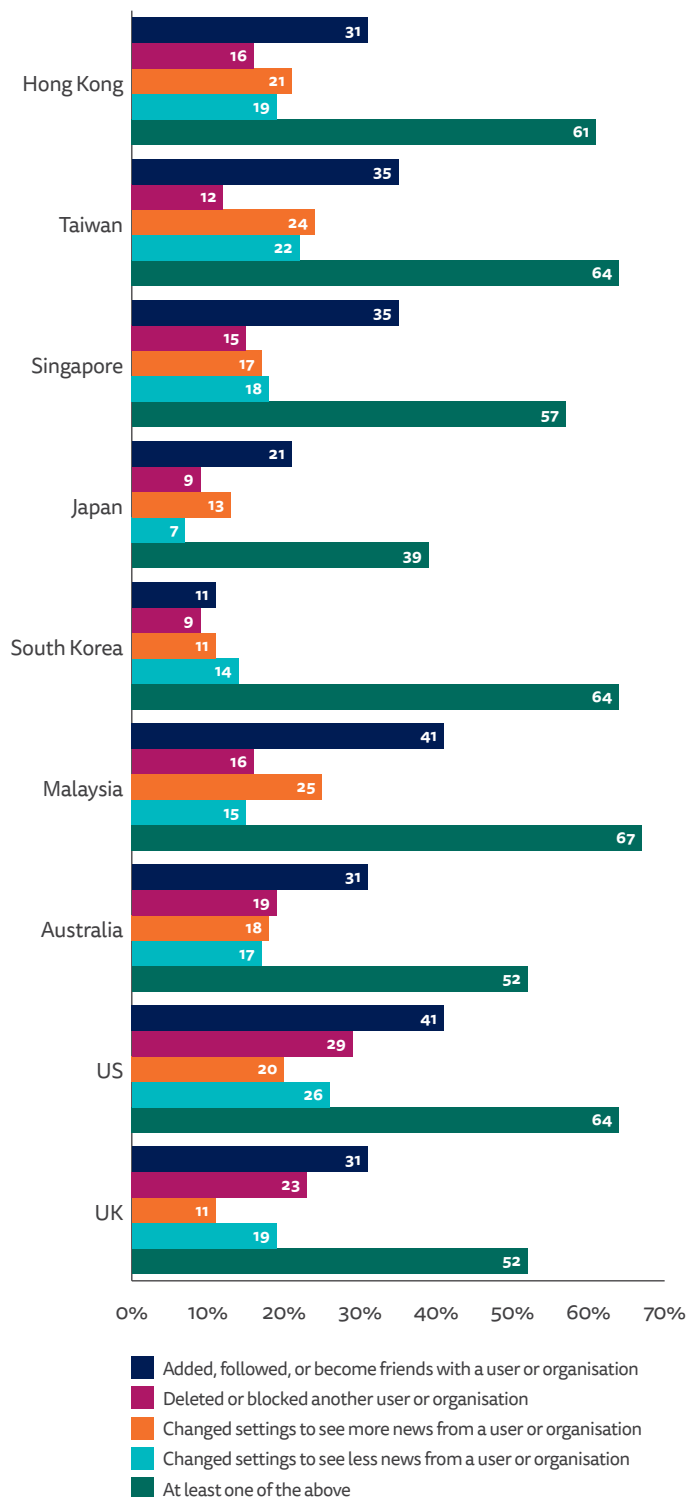


Q12Dii. You say you use Facebook for news. Which of the following statements applies best to you? Base: All who have used Facebook for news (Hong Kong=1091, Taiwan=564, Singapore=1102, Japan=172, Korea=552, Malaysia=1215, US=1079, UK=617, Australia=782). Note: The small proportion who selected 'Don't know' is not shown.

CURATING NEWS RECEPTION ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Although social media users often incidentally stumble across news, it does not mean that they have no control over their news reception. Indeed, many social media platforms offer tools for users to actively construct their own information environment. On the one hand, users can add, follow, and become friends with a user or organisation when they feel interested in the news they post or share. On the other hand, users can delete or block others. Moreover, by changing one's own account settings, people can see more news from a particular user or organisation, or less. Taken together, these various tools can, to a certain extent, help users to curate news reception according to their social media preferences.

NEWS CURATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA BY COUNTRY



Q12D_2017. Thinking about when you have used social media for news, which of the following (if any) have you done in the last year on any social network? Please select all that apply. Base: All who have used social media for news (Hong Kong=1629, Taiwan=853, Singapore=1606, Japan=814, South Korea=1204, Malaysia=1799, US=1453, UK=897, Australia=1125).

3. News Participation

So how often do social media users make use of such news curation tools? Generally speaking, social media users are not very enthusiastic in using all these tools. None of the tools are used by the majority of respondents in the countries covered here. Yet a considerable amount of social media users say that they have ‘added, followed, or become friends with a user or organisation’. About 40% of users in Malaysia and the US and more than 30% in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Australia, and the UK have done so. Comparatively, fewer users have ever deleted or blocked other users or organisations on their platforms. In Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, Malaysia, and Australia, there are more people changing settings to see more news, whereas more respondents in Singapore, South Korea, the US, and the UK have changed settings to see less news. Overall, in most countries, more than half of our respondents have used at least one of the news curation tools (Japan is the only exception).

In addition, we found that the use of news curation tools varies by age and education. In most countries surveyed here, younger news users (those aged 18–29 and/or aged 30–45) engage in more news curation activities than older users (aged 46 or above). With regard to educational level, those who have a higher educational level (i.e. with university education) use more news curation tools than those who have a lower level. This pattern holds true across all countries. Pairing the two findings together, it seems clear that the use of news curation tools is related to digital literacy. As the young and highly educated people have more digital knowledge and skills, they are more able to curate their news reception with the available tools in hand.

Moreover, we also surmise that users’ adoption of news curation tools may relate to their interest in news. Our analyses demonstrate that, across most countries, people who are highly interested in news generally use more news curation tools than others. This shows that people highly interested in news care more about what kinds of content they receive and may want to exercise more control over their news reception.

Digital media offer easier and more convenient connectivity, the potential for far more interactive forms of media use, and have been identified with a more ‘participatory culture’ than that of pre-digital mass media.¹³ Instead of passively receiving news, internet users nowadays can easily interact with various kinds of news, such as rating a news story, sharing and commenting on news, and creating original news content. It is clear that the collapse of context that characterises much digital media use (especially social media) can complicate more expressive and participatory forms of use for people balancing different roles (as acquaintances, friends, colleagues, family members, citizens, etc.) in one accessible, shared forum, and that people in different countries have very different propensities for participation.¹⁴ But the potential for participation is real and many embrace it.

In our survey, sharing news on social networks is the most widely reported form of online participation across many markets, particularly in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Malaysia. News sharing via instant messenger is also popular in some markets, such as Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia. However, sharing news via email is far less common. Commenting is another prevalent form of online participation. But commenting on news in social networks is more common than on news websites.

In addition, a considerable number of internet users favour rating news stories. Generally, these three types of participation – sharing, commenting, and rating – are more widely carried out than other even more proactive forms of participation, such as writing a blog, posting or sending a picture/video, and taking part in online campaigns. It is clear that the platform-enabled forms of participation associated with ‘web 2.0’ are more widespread than older forms of participation associated with ‘web 1.0’.¹⁵

While the focus of our survey and this report is about digital news and online news consumption, it is important to acknowledge that offline news consumption still constitutes a significant part of people’s daily news practices. Indeed, our data show that ‘talk with friends and colleagues about a news story’ leads all other forms of participation (online and offline) in most countries covered here. The importance of face-to-face communication has not been displaced by digitally mediated communication.

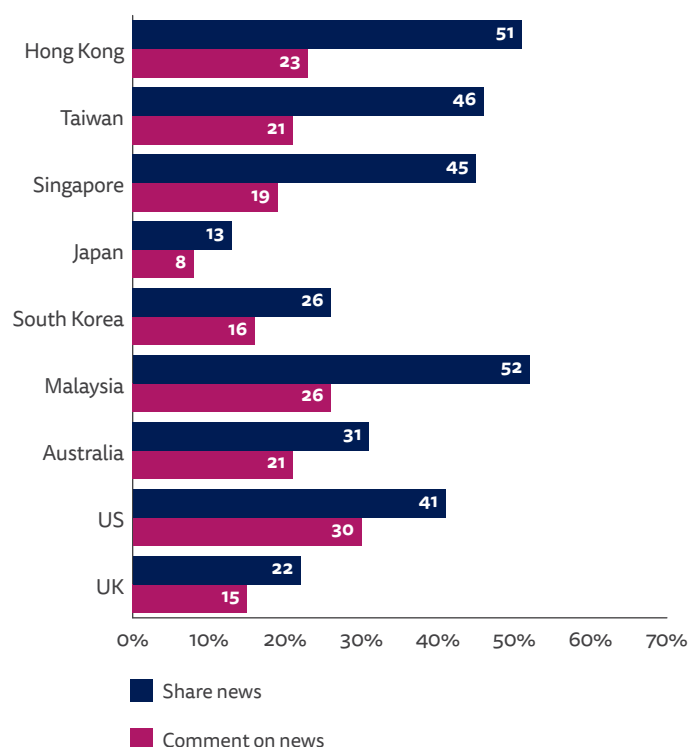
“In most countries surveyed here, younger news users engage in more news curation activities than older users.”

¹³ See e.g. Jenkins 2006.

¹⁴ See e.g. Marwick and Boyd 2011; Hölig et al. 2016.

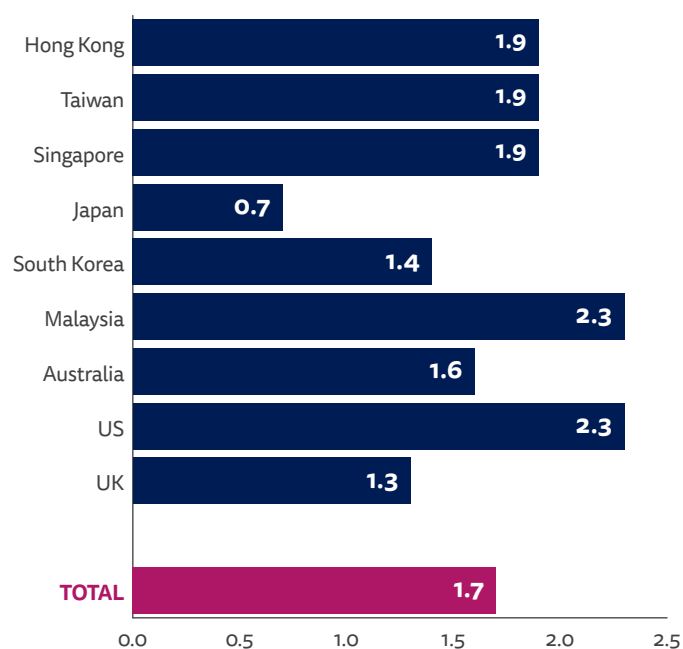
¹⁵ As also found by others, see e.g. van Dijck 2013.

PARTICIPATION IN NEWS BY COUNTRY



Q13. During an average week in which, if any, of the following ways do you share or participate in news coverage? Please select all that apply. Base: Total sample in each country. Note: The small portion who selected 'None of these' is not shown.

NUMBER OF NEWS PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES BY COUNTRY



Base: Total sample in each country. Note: This calculation is based on Q13. During an average week in which, if any, of the following ways do you share or participate in news coverage? Please select all that apply.

We calculate the average number of participation activities for each country.¹⁶ The overall participation level is low. While there are 13 activities included in the survey, the total average number is only 1.7. Internet users in Malaysia and the US are the most 'active', followed by users in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore. The participation levels of Australia and South Korea are both below the total average. Again, Japan is the least active country, this time in terms of news participation. Overall, the level of news participation varies significantly country from country.¹⁷

"Internet users in Malaysia and the US are the most 'active', followed by users in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore."



¹⁶ Although different kinds of news participation may require varying levels of skill and effort, we simply treat all of them equally here.

¹⁷ Using ANOVA test, we find that the differences are significant ($F=137.5$; $p < 0.001^{***}$).

4. Receiving News Beyond Needs and Interests

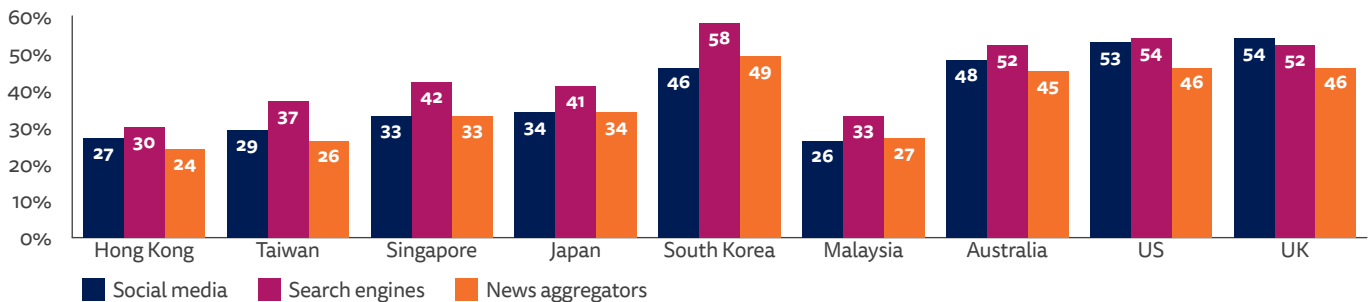
As internet users stumble across various kinds of news online, some news materials may align with users' needs and interests and some may not. Our survey includes questions that ask whether internet users often see news coming from media outlets that they do not normally use and whether they often see news that they have no interest in. The focus here is on what has been called 'perceived plurality', whether people feel that social media, search, and news aggregators lead them to sources of news they would not otherwise use.¹⁸

When using social media for news, only around 20–30% of respondents in Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, Japan, and Malaysia agree with the statement that 'I often see news from outlets that I would not normally use'. However, the numbers are particularly high in South Korea and Australia, where about half of the respondents encounter this situation, but are less than those in the US and the UK. The same pattern is found in the other two settings. When using search engines and news aggregators, South Korea, Australia, the US, and the UK all have more respondents than other markets who agree with the above statement.

We then examine the extent to which internet users see news that they have no interest in. Again, in all three settings, sizeable numbers of respondents in South Korea, Australia, the US, and the UK agree with the statement that 'I often see news stories that I am not interested in', more than the figures in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and Malaysia. The only exception this time is that the number in Japan is higher than in the previous situation. Taking the two sets of findings together, respondents in the Asia-Pacific markets (except South Korea) reportedly encounter a lower diversity of news online than their counterparts in the US and the UK.

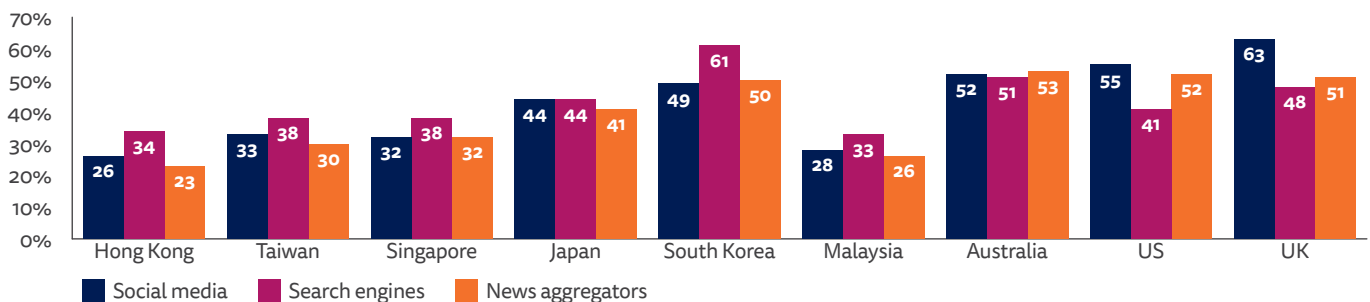
Since social media are the main gateway to online news for many users, one interesting question is whether the network structure of social media affects people's exposure to news that is beyond their needs and interests. In other words, if people are connected to others in social media who are dissimilar to them, would they be exposed to more diverse news, such as those they do not normally use or do not feel interested in?

SEEING NEWS FROM OUTLETS NOT NORMALLY USED



Q12Fi_2017_1, Q12Fii_2017_1, Q12Fiii_2017_1. Thinking about when you have used social media for news/ search engines to search for news topics/ news aggregators, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: 'I often see news from outlets that I would not normally use' (for social media and news aggregators) / 'My search results often contain links to news outlets I would not normally use' (for search engines). Base (social media): Hong Kong=1631, Taiwan=853, Singapore=1605, Japan=813, South Korea=1204, Malaysia=1798, US=1454, UK=897, Australia=1124. Base (search engines): Hong Kong=553, Taiwan=351, Singapore=503, Japan=524, South Korea=723, Malaysia=647, US=568, UK=254, Australia=408. Base (news aggregators): Hong Kong=1561, Taiwan=802, Singapore=898, Japan=821, South Korea=1057, Malaysia=1122, US=956, UK=413, Australia=679. Note: The percentages include the respondents who answered 'Tend to agree' and 'Strongly agree'.

SEEING NEWS STORIES NOT INTERESTED IN



Q12Fi_2017_2, Q12Fii_2017_2, Q12Fiii_2017_2. Thinking about when you have used social media for news/ search engines to search for news topics/ news aggregators, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: 'I often see news stories that I am not interested in' (for social media and news aggregators) / 'My search results often contain links to news stories that are not related to what I searched for' (for search engines). Base (social media): Hong Kong=1630, Taiwan=853, Singapore=1606, Japan=813, South Korea=1204, Malaysia=1799, US=1452, UK=896, Australia=1125. Base (search engines): Hong Kong=552, Taiwan=351, Singapore=502, Japan=524, South Korea=723, Malaysia=649, US=569, UK=254, Australia=405. Base (news aggregators): Hong Kong=1563, Taiwan=803, Singapore=898, Japan=821, South Korea=1057, Malaysia=1121, US=955, UK=413, Australia=680. Note: The percentages include the respondents who answered 'Tend to agree' and 'Strongly agree'.

¹⁸ Fletcher and Nielsen 2017b.

5. Are People Paying for Online News?

CHARGING FOR ONLINE NEWS IN ASIA-PACIFIC

In the era of information abundance, people can access large amounts of free news content online, and publishers have often been reluctant to implement pay models for fear of losing audience reach and advertising revenues. However, a range of media outlets in different countries are increasingly operating various forms of pay models.¹⁹

In Japan, for instance, major newspaper brands such as *Asahi* and *Nikkei* offer online subscriptions, as does the business newspaper *Nikkei*. Similarly, in Singapore, several major newspapers, including the upmarket general-interest *Straits Times* as well as the *Business Times*, offer online subscriptions, as does the Chinese-language *Zaobao* (which is significantly cheaper). In contrast, in Taiwan, most of the newspapers offer most of their content for free, though some news outlets may charge a relatively small yearly fee for access to specialised content, news photos, and archival materials.

EXAMPLES OF ONLINE MEDIA CHARGING FOR SUBSCRIPTION

Country	Brand	Media type	Payment model	Amount per year	Content behind paywall
Hong Kong 	The Initium	Online-only news outlet	Online subscription	HKD900 (USD115)	A portion of in-depth reportage and commentaries
	mingpao.com	Website of newspaper	Online subscription	HKD698 (USD89)	A small portion of daily content plus access to archived articles
	Hkej.com	Website of newspaper	Online subscription	HKD698 (USD89)	Most of the content of the daily print version; the newspaper's content of the previous 2 years
Taiwan 	Want Daily/China Times	Website of newspaper	Online subscription	TWD1,800 (USD60)	Access to all archived articles and archived photos, access to specialised topical news
	Apple Daily	Website of newspaper	Online subscription	TWD5,400 (USD180)	Daily print version plus multimedia content
	Udndata.com (from United Daily)	Database of newspaper	Online purchase	TWD2,000 (USD66)	Access to the United Daily's database, including access to 3 years' content of Economic Daily News, United Daily and United Evening News, access to news photos
Singapore 	The Straits Times	Website of newspaper	Online subscription	SGD418.8 (USD309)	Unlimited access to articles and e-paper, get access to 7-day news archive
	Zaobao	Website of newspaper	Online subscription	SGD140 (USD103)	Content of the daily print version, the newspaper's content of the previous 7 years
	Business Times	Website of newspaper	Online subscription	SGD418.8 (USD309)	Daily issues and in-depth analysis and commentaries, stock reports, business and technology trends
Japan 	Nikkei	Website of newspaper	Online subscription	JPY50,400 (USD461)	Content of the daily print version (like morning and evening newspaper), unlimited access to paid content, original digital content, like video
	Asahi	Website of newspaper	Online subscription	JPY45,600 (USD418)	Content of the daily print version, the newspaper's content of the subscribed 1 year, unlimited access to paid content
	Mainichi	Website of newspaper	Online subscription	JPY38,400 (USD352)	Content of the daily print version, the newspaper's content of the previous 5 years, the Wall Street Journal (non-subscribers need to register to read it), unlimited access to paid content
Malaysia 	MalaysiaKini	Online-only news outlet	Online subscription	MYR150 (USD35)	Unrestricted access to news
	The Star Online	Website of newspaper	Online subscription	MYR180 (USD42)	Access to The Star e-newspaper, plus 4 regional e-newspapers. Privileges include getting early news at 6 am, audio reader, and sharing articles on SNS
	Sinchew.com.my	Website of newspaper	Online subscription	MYR70 (USD16)	Digital version of the print newspaper, plus 1 regional e-newspaper
South Korea 	Chosun	Website of newspaper	Online subscription	KRW396,000 (USD353)	Access to digital version of print newspaper, reading point accumulation (for exchanging gifts)
	The Korea Times	Website of newspaper	Online subscription	KRW120,000 (USD107)	Access to open and download all PDF files from 2002 editions (digital archive)
	DongA.com	Website of newspaper	Online subscription	KRW98,000 (USD87)	Access to all archived issues and PDF viewing, printing, and sharing
	Hk.hankyung.com	Online-only news outlet	Online subscription	KRW180,000 (USD160)	Access to Hankyung mobile newspapers and Wall Street Journals

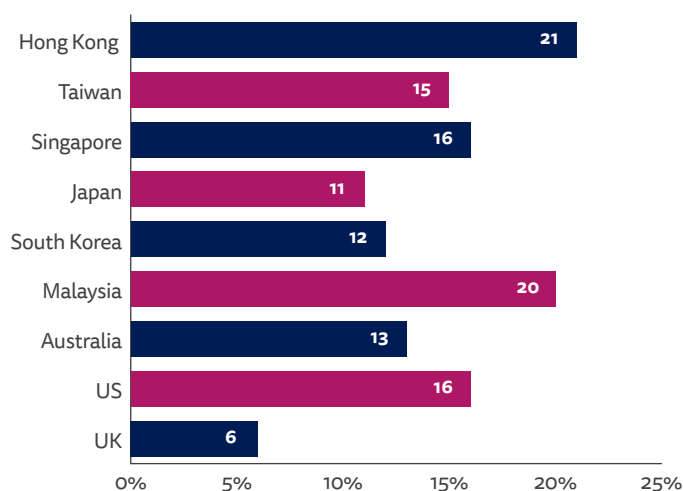
Note. Information gathered by the authors from the various websites.

¹⁹ See e.g. Cornia et al. 2017.

MINORITY PAY FOR ONLINE NEWS

Faced with a range of free and paid sources of news, how many people in Asia-Pacific markets are paying for online news? In line with findings in other markets, we find that only a minority in the Asia-Pacific markets covered here say they pay for online news. Hong Kong has the highest percentage of people paying for online news, with 21% saying they have paid at least once in the past year.²⁰ It is closely followed by Malaysia (19.7%). Taiwan, Singapore, Japan, South Korea, Australia, and the US are 'medium' online news markets, with about 11–16% of users who pay. Among all countries, the UK is the most unfavourable market for online news, which registers only a single-digit percentage (5.7%) of user willingness to pay. Across the 36 markets covered in the 2017 *Digital News Report*, 13% of respondents say they pay for online news. Most of the Asia-Pacific markets covered here have similar or higher numbers of people paying for news.

PAYING FOR NEWS



Q7a. Have you paid for online news content in the last year? (This could be digital subscription, combined digital/ print subscription, or one-off payment for an article or app or e-edition).
Base: Total sample in each country.

"Hong Kong has the highest percentage of people paying for online news, with 21% saying they have paid at least once in the past year."







PAYING FOR NEWS ACCESSIBILITY, NEWS DIVERSITY, AND SPECIALISED INFORMATION

Given the abundance of free news available online, why do some people pay? We asked all respondents who said they pay for online news follow-up questions to capture their motivations. Convenience comes out top. About 30–40% of those who pay say they pay because it 'allows me to access news from my smartphone or tablet'. Second comes access to content, as around 20–30% of online news payers suggest that 'I like to consume news from a range of sources'. These are the top two reasons for online news payment in most countries. The former reason is cited as the top reason in Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, and the UK, while the latter is the most important reason in Taiwan, South Korea, Malaysia, Australia, and the US. Meanwhile, a notable portion of respondents also pay for online news because of their need for specialised information – information that other people do not have, particular information that is related to their jobs, and information about specific topics (e.g. sport, hobbies, or other interests).

The reasons above emphasise the benefits and interests from the consumer perspective focused on convenience and content. Our survey also asks whether the respondents would pay for online news in order 'to help fund journalism', out of conviction. We find that this is not a main concern for online news consumers. Except in Australia and the US, where about 25% to 30% of the respondents highlight this motivation, the figures in other Asia-Pacific markets are about 15% or less. Those who pay for online news thus pay for a variety of different reasons, including not only the perceived quality of content, but also convenience, and due to their commitment to certain kinds of journalism.

²⁰ The figure includes both subscriptions and one-off payments.

REASONS FOR PAYING FOR ONLINE NEWS BY COUNTRY

	Hong Kong	Taiwan	Singapore	Japan	South Korea	Malaysia	Australia	US	UK
									
To help fund journalism	15%	16%	12%	11%	15%	14%	25%	29%	17%
To access news from smartphone or tablet	33%	36%	41%	32%	28%	28%	30%	33%	34%
Paid news is better than free news	24%	29%	17%	20%	17%	19%	18%	15%	14%
Favourite news source does not allow free access	19%	32%	16%	15%	19%	18%	25%	22%	25%
To consume news from a range of sources	23%	37%	27%	30%	38%	30%	32%	36%	29%
I was offered a good deal	23%	27%	27%	11%	10%	20%	30%	27%	24%
To access information that most people do not	20%	31%	22%	10%	28%	25%	21%	15%	8%
I need particular information for my job	19%	34%	12%	23%	18%	21%	15%	11%	12%
It is the only way to access specialist information	18%	23%	12%	23%	21%	27%	22%	10%	2%
There were benefits from membership other than news	21%	31%	15%	11%	14%	18%	24%	15%	13%
It is cheaper than paying for offline access	19%	21%	16%	9%	19%	22%	21%	9%	12%
I was able to pay for print and online access together	21%	32%	35%	14%	13%	22%	30%	27%	25%










Q7a ii. You said that you have paid for online news in the last year. What are the most important reasons for this? Please select all that apply. Base: All who have paid for online news content in the last year (Hong Kong=417, Taiwan=149, Singapore=315, Japan=227, South Korea=233, Malaysia=416, US=357, UK=121, Australia=264). Note: The small proportion who selected 'Other', 'Don't know' and 'None of these' is not shown.

TIMELY NEWS, NEWS ANALYSIS, AND OPINIONATED INFORMATION AS APPEALING CONTENT

Content-wise, what are the main attractions for users who pay for online news? The results show that people are mostly attracted by timely news information – ‘breaking news’ and ‘reporting on recent events’. About half of the respondents in Singapore, Japan, Malaysia, and Australia suggest that receiving ‘breaking news’ is a deciding factor in making payment. Moreover, more than 40% in Taiwan, Singapore, and Australia – and close to 50% in the US – name ‘reporting on recent events’ as the content they are paying for.

Those who pay for online news also say they value ‘comment and opinion’ and ‘in-depth analysis or explanation’. The percentages of these two types of content mostly range from 30% to 40% across all countries. However, respondents in Taiwan are especially enthused about such content. In Taiwan, more than 40% and 50% attach importance to ‘comment and opinion’ and ‘in-depth analysis or explanation’ respectively.

ATTRACTIONS IN PAYING FOR NEWS

	Hong Kong	Taiwan	Singapore	Japan	South Korea	Malaysia	Australia	US	UK
									
Breaking news	39%	32%	51%	48%	33%	50%	50%	43%	32%
Reporting on recent events	37%	45%	43%	39%	35%	34%	44%	49%	33%
Comment and opinion	32%	41%	32%	27%	36%	28%	40%	37%	46%
In-depth analysis or explanation	38%	54%	36%	41%	38%	29%	40%	47%	44%
Amusing or entertaining content	38%	42%	24%	28%	30%	22%	25%	19%	14%
News related to my work or profession	23%	39%	29%	31%	30%	30%	29%	21%	21%
Specialist news about my hobbies or interests	31%	51%	22%	38%	32%	25%	26%	17%	18%
Access to news archives	35%	34%	27%	26%	33%	25%	30%	25%	19%

Q7a.iii. You said that you paid for online news in the last year. Which types of news coverage were most important to your decision to pay? Please select all that apply. Base: All who have paid for online news content in the last year (Hong Kong=417, Taiwan=149, Singapore=315, Japan=227, South Korea=233, Malaysia=416, US=357, UK=121, Australia=264). Note: The small proportion who selected ‘Other,’ ‘Don’t know’ and ‘None of these’ is not shown.












“The results show that people are mostly attracted by timely news information.”

WHY DON'T PEOPLE PAY FOR ONLINE NEWS?

In addition to understanding the motivations of the minority who do pay for online news, it is important to understand the majority who do not. Again, we have asked them follow-up questions. Across all Asia-Pacific markets and in the US and the UK, the majority of respondents who do not pay say this is because they 'can get online news for free'. A large number of respondents, especially in Taiwan and Hong Kong, also suggest that 'online news isn't worth paying for'. In contrast, there are only small portions of respondents who do not pay for news because 'making the payment will be too much hassle', 'I don't like using my credit card or bank details online', 'I'm worried it will be difficult to cancel the payment', or 'I'm not online enough'. There are more who say they cannot afford payment for online news, but the percentages are only up to about 20% in Japan and 24% in Australia.

This suggests that the lack of technical know-how and financial affordability are not the main reasons people choose not to pay. Rather, people do not have the urge to pay for online news because they think it is unnecessary and not appealing enough. Many are clearly satisfied with the news and information available for free, and many have never been asked to pay for their favourite news sources.

REASONS FOR NOT PAYING FOR ONLINE NEWS BY COUNTRY

	Hong Kong	Taiwan	Singapore	Japan	South Korea	Malaysia	Australia	US	UK
									
Making the payment will be too much hassle	7%	9%	7%	10%	9%	10%	5%	5%	4%
Do not like using credit card or bank details online	13%	14%	8%	7%	6%	13%	10%	10%	6%
It will be difficult to cancel the payment	12%	6%	8%	5%	3%	11%	6%	6%	5%
I'm not online enough	2%	1%	4%	2%	4%	7%	4%	3%	3%
Do not own a smartphone or a tablet	2%	1%	1%	5%	1%	2%	4%	5%	2%
Cannot afford it at the moment	7%	8%	10%	20%	17%	14%	24%	24%	17%
Can get online news for free	55%	58%	62%	49%	54%	56%	51%	53%	55%
Online news isn't worth paying for	39%	37%	19%	11%	16%	25%	26%	24%	27%
Prefer to consume news offline	10%	10%	22%	14%	18%	28%	22%	18%	23%
Not interested enough in the news	3%	6%	10%	3%	6%	9%	15%	9%	10%
Favourite news source doesn't currently charge for access	33%	30%	21%	37%	36%	27%	23%	25%	23%

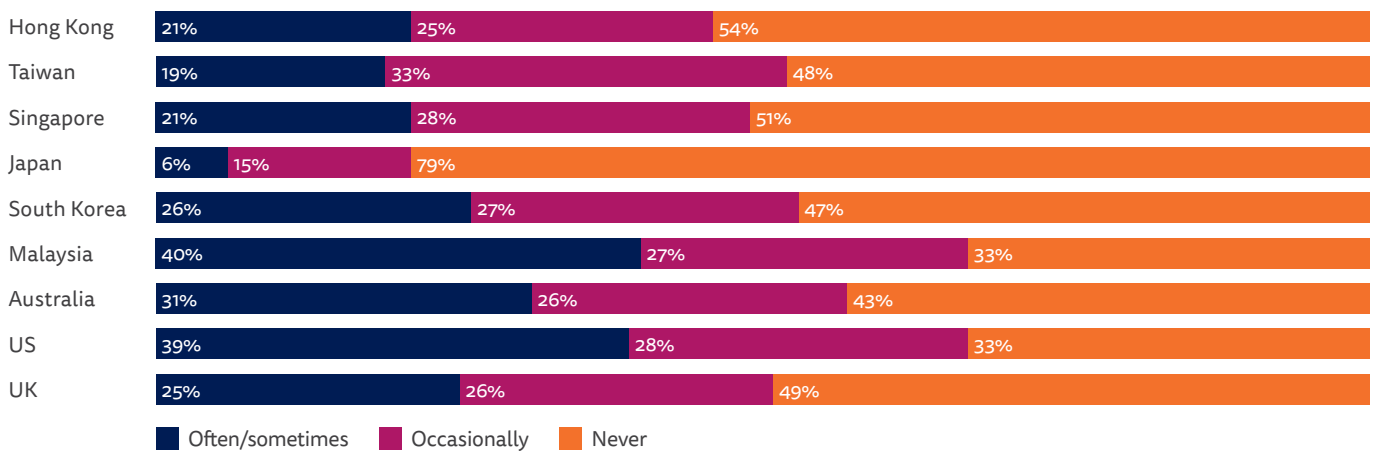
Q7avi. You said you have not paid for online digital content in the last year. What are the most important reasons for this? Please select all that apply. Base: All who have not paid for online news content in the last year (Hong Kong=1539, Taiwan=851, Singapore=1626, Japan=1687, South Korea=1707, Malaysia=1561, US=1795, UK=1944, Australia=1655). Note: The small proportion who selected 'Other', 'Don't know' and 'None of these' is not shown.

6. News Avoidance

Traditionally, much audience research has exhibited a 'pro-usage bias'. That is, analysts have mostly examined what news people like to consume, the ways they consume news, and the psychological and behavioural consequences after consumption. However, receiving and consuming news is just one facet of people's engagement with news. In fact, on many occasions, people may want to avoid news for a variety of reasons.²¹ To examine this phenomenon our survey includes questions that ask the respondents whether they would actively try to avoid news and the reasons for doing so.

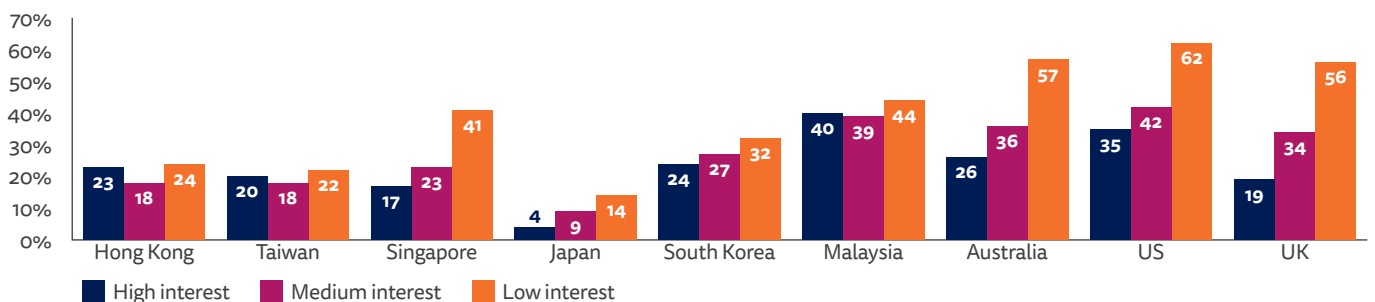
In most markets covered in this report, a majority of respondents have engaged in news avoidance. Over 50% of respondents in Taiwan, South Korea, and Australia say that they have proactively tried to avoid news. In Malaysia and the US, about 40% of respondents say that they 'often' or 'sometimes' actively try to avoid news. In Singapore and the UK, the proportions of respondents who have and have not engaged in news avoidance are approximately half-and-half. In the Asia-Pacific region, only the respondents in Hong Kong and Japan act differently. In Hong Kong, over half of the respondents (54%) say that they never actively try to avoid news. In Japan, about 79% of respondents never do so.

NEWS AVOIDANCE



Q1d1_2017. Do you find yourself actively trying to avoid news these days? Base: Total sample in each country. Note: The respondents who selected 'Don't know' are excluded from analysis.










'OFTEN' OR 'SOMETIMES' AVOIDING NEWS BY LEVEL OF NEWS INTEREST



Q1d1_2017. Do you find yourself actively trying to avoid news these days? Base (low interest): Hong Kong=132, Taiwan=99, Singapore=124, Japan=78, South Korea=104, Malaysia=220, US=121, UK=63, Australia=107. Base (medium interest): Hong Kong=836, Taiwan=402, Singapore=826, Japan=605, South Korea=841, Malaysia=832, US=549, UK=637, Australia=601. Base (high interest): Hong Kong=1027, Taiwan=491, Singapore=1000, Japan=1221, South Korea=1026, Malaysia=952, US=1532, UK=1369, Australia=1262. Note: 'High interest' includes those who selected 'Extremely interested' and 'Very interested' in Q1c 'How interested, if at all, would you say you are in news?'. 'Medium interest' includes those who selected 'Somewhat interested'. And 'Low interest' consists of those answering 'Not very interested' and 'Not at all interested'.

²¹ Woodstock 2014.

REASONS FOR AVOIDING NEWS BY COUNTRY

	Hong Kong	Taiwan	Singapore	Japan	South Korea	Malaysia	Australia	US	UK
									
It can have a negative effect on my mood	37%	48%	38%	54%	44%	29%	49%	56%	49%
Graphic images upset me	30%	29%	14%	17%	3%	15%	24%	12%	21%
It disturbs my ability to concentrate on more important things	24%	23%	22%	13%	18%	19%	17%	17%	10%
It consumes too much of my time	18%	26%	24%	16%	14%	18%	16%	12%	11%
It leads to arguments I'd rather avoid	32%	44%	18%	21%	56%	21%	14%	20%	10%
I can't rely on news to be true	18%	21%	30%	30%	26%	42%	32%	32%	26%
I don't feel there is anything I can do about it	19%	17%	30%	15%	18%	25%	25%	27%	33%

Q1dii_2017: You said that you find yourself trying to avoid news. Which, if any, of the following are reasons why you actively try to avoid news? Please select all that apply. Base: All who chose 'Often', 'Sometimes', and 'Occasionally' in Q1di_2017 (Hong Kong=918, Taiwan=522, Singapore=963, Japan=409, South Korea=1049, Malaysia=1357, US=1470, UK=1052, Australia=1125). Note: The small proportion who selected 'Other' and 'I don't know' is not shown.

One may intuitively think that people avoid news because they are not interested in it. Our analysis finds that this is not the case. While in Singapore, Japan, South Korea, Australia, as well as in the US and the UK, people least interested in news are clearly more likely to 'often' or 'sometimes' avoid news, the pattern is not clear in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Malaysia, where people with different levels of interest in news are more or less equally likely to avoid news.

When asked about the reasons to avoid news, 'it can have a negative effect on my mood' is the top reason cited by respondents in all countries except South Korea and Malaysia. In Japan and the US, over half of respondents (54% and 56% respectively) chose this option, followed by those in Taiwan, Australia, and the UK. In South Korea, most respondents turn away from news because they want to avoid certain arguments (56%), whereas the idea that 'I can't rely on news to be true' is the most commonly cited reason for news avoiders in Malaysia (41.8%).

7. News Trustworthiness and Perceptions of Media Independence

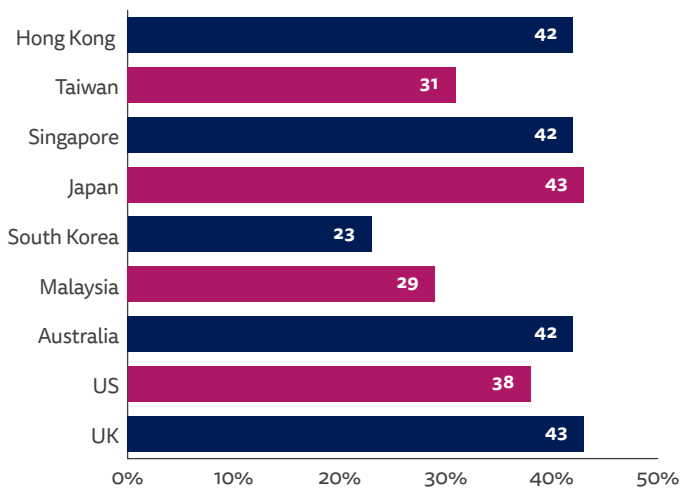
TRUST IN NEWS

Finally, our survey examines how people evaluate the news environment. In particular, we seek to understand whether people trust the news in general and whether they perceive the media as independent of undue political and commercial influences. We find that trust in news varies across the region, as does people's perception of whether media are free from undue political and/or commercial influence. The variation is not neatly aligned with outside groups' assessment of press freedom.²²

Compared with data from our 2016 pilot study,²³ there is a decrease of people's trust in the news in many places. Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and the UK have witnessed a drop in the percentage of people who say that they have trust in the news. The percentages have remained stable in Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, and Australia.

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO TRUST NEWS, 2016 AND 2017

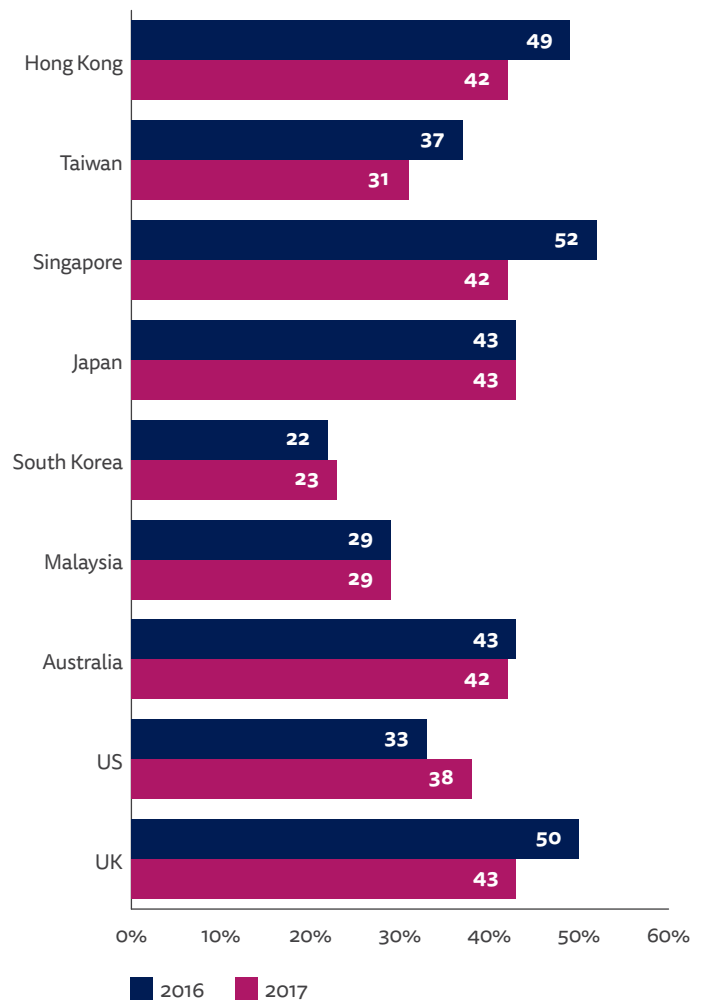
TRUST IN NEWS BY COUNTRY



Q6_2016_1. Please indicate the level of agreement with the following statement. 'I think you can trust most news most of the time.' Base: Total sample in each country. Note 1: Net agree includes respondents who answered 'Tend to agree' and 'Strongly agree'. Net disagree includes 'Strongly disagree' and 'Tend to disagree'. Note 2: Some of the data does not round up to 100%.

There are substantial variations in people's trust in news in different Asia-Pacific countries. In Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, and Australia, a high percentage (over 40%) of respondents say that they trust most news most of the time. The figures are comparable with those in the UK and the US. Taiwan occupies a middle position, with nearly one-third of respondents having trust in the news. However, the results in Korea and Malaysia reveal a problem of trust. In both countries, less than 30% of respondents say that they trust the news. At the same time, similar proportions of respondents say that they do not trust the news.

Nevertheless, a considerable share of respondents in many Asia-Pacific markets actually hold a 'neutral' view towards news trustworthiness. Over 40% of respondents in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, and Malaysia say that they neither trust nor distrust the news. More than 30% of the respondents in Australia and the UK express the same view. In this regard, the US stands out among all countries covered here, as only about 20% do not take sides.



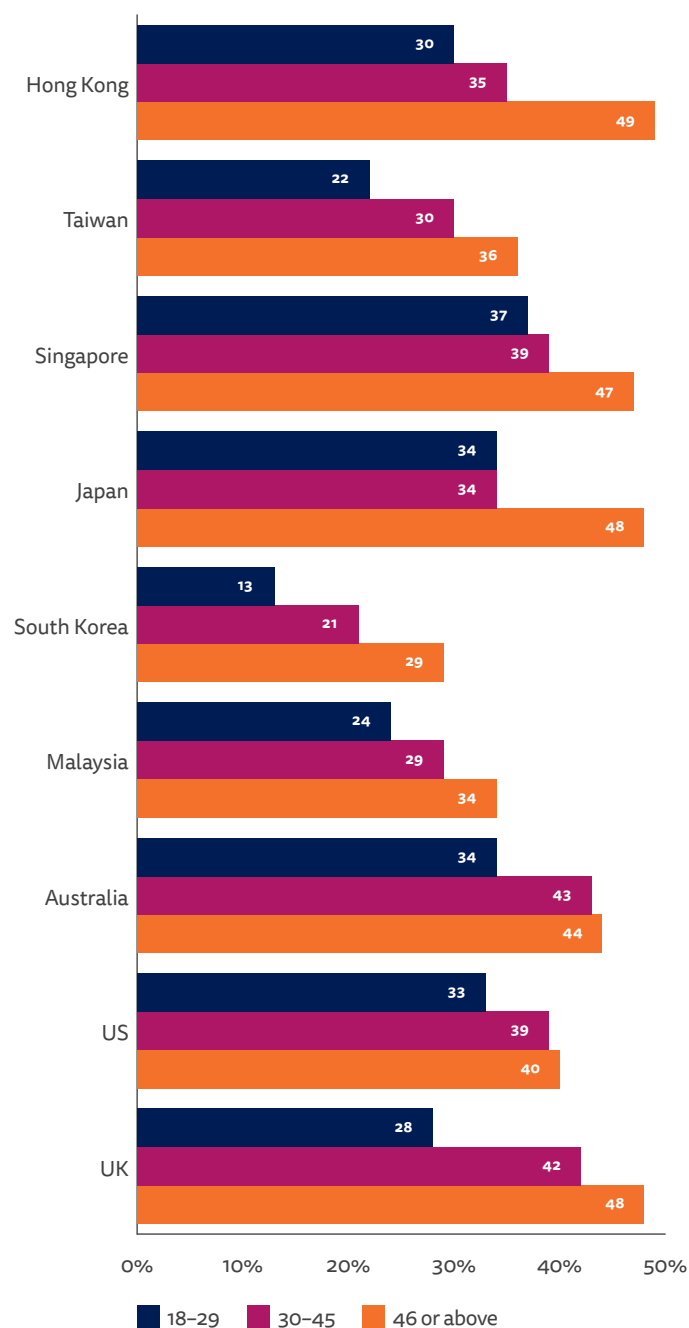
Q6_2016_1. Please indicate the level of agreement with the following statement. 'I think you can trust most news most of the time.' Base: Total sample in each country for 2016 and 2017.

²² Pothong and Nielsen (2016) found the same, that there is no direct relationship between how groups like Freedom House and Reporters without Borders rank media freedom and whether people in a given country trust the media and see media as free from undue political and/or commercial influence.

²³ See Pothong and Nielsen 2016: 21.

When demographics are considered, trust in the news increases by age. This holds true across all seven Asia-Pacific markets, as well as in the US and the UK. However, there is no difference between those with and without university education in most surveyed markets.

TRUST IN NEWS BY AGE

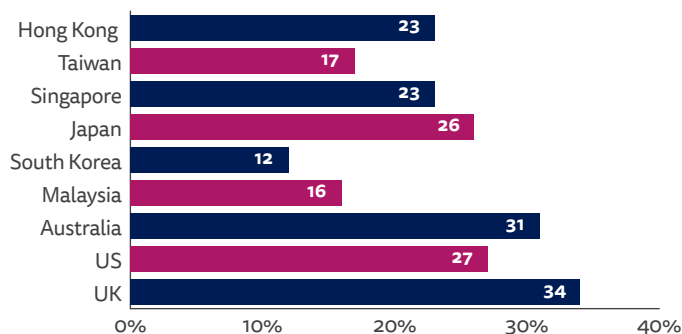


Q6_2016_1. Please indicate the level of agreement with the following statement. 'I think you can trust most news most of the time.' Base: All those who answered 'Tend to agree' and 'Strongly agree'. 18-29: Hong Kong=321, Taiwan=202, Singapore=580, Japan=274, Korea=392, Malaysia=618, US=504, UK=353, Australia=407. 30-45: Hong Kong=569, Taiwan=312, Singapore=672, Japan=506, Korea=583, Malaysia=705, US=630, UK=598, Australia=575. 46 or above: Hong Kong=1126, Taiwan=504, Singapore=748, Japan=1221, Korea=1027, Malaysia=785, US=1125, UK=1161, Australia=1020.

PERCEPTIONS OF MEDIA INDEPENDENCE

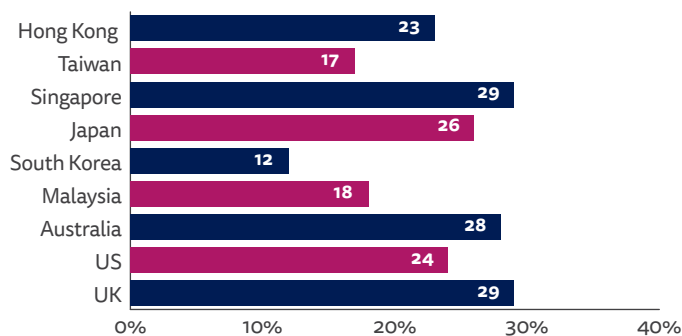
Several factors may influence people's trust in news. Two prominent ones are undue political and commercial interventions. In most Asia-Pacific regions covered here, large portions of people disagree with the statement that 'the news media in my country are independent from undue political or government influence most of the time'. The 'most affected country' is South Korea, where over 60% of its respondents are concerned that their news media are affected by undue political influence. Taiwan and Malaysia follow with figures over 40% – comparable with figures in the US.

PERCEPTIONS OF FREEDOM FROM UNDUE POLITICAL INFLUENCE BY COUNTRY



Q6_2016_4. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement. 'The news media in my country is independent from undue political or government influence most of the time'. Showing respondents who answered 'Tend to agree' and 'Strongly agree'. Base: Total sample in each country.

PERCEPTIONS OF FREEDOM FROM UNDUE COMMERCIAL INFLUENCE BY COUNTRY



Q6_2016_5. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement. 'The news media in my country is independent from undue business or commercial influence most of the time'. Showing respondents who answered 'Tend to agree' and 'Strongly agree'. Base: Total sample in each country.

Similarly, when asked to evaluate the statement 'the news media in my country are independent from undue business or commercial influence most of the time', a considerable number of respondents disagree. Comparing the answers to both statements, we find that people in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and Malaysia are more concerned with political influence on news media than commercial influence. For other countries, the share of respondents who have concern over undue political influence is roughly similar to those concerned about commercial influence.

8. Conclusions

This report examines the most important aspects of people's online media and news use as well as their attitudes towards and perceptions of news media in a sample of key Asia-Pacific markets. The topics covered include how users come across and consume news, the role of smartphones and of platform companies, people's engagement with and participation in news on social media and elsewhere, as well as the diversity of their news exposure, willingness to pay for online news, and trust in news. Our primary focus has been on similarities and differences across our sample of key Asia-Pacific markets, but we have also included the US and the UK as reference points in order to shed light on possible regional specificities compared with trends elsewhere.

Key similarities across the region include –

1. Several Asia-Pacific markets are vibrant mobile-first markets. They lead the US and the UK in the adoption of new technologies, such as smartphones, for news. With often highly developed connectivity and younger populations who have embraced new technologies, these markets are very much mobile markets.
2. Platform companies including search engines and particularly social media are key to how people across Asia-Pacific markets are accessing, consuming, sharing, and commenting on news. The proportion of social media news users exceeds that of the US and the UK.
3. Respondents in almost all Asia-Pacific markets (except South Korea) encounter less diversity of news than those in the US and the UK, whether it is through social media, search engines, or news aggregators.

Though more developed than many other high-income markets and thus a possible indication of what the future could look like elsewhere, it is also important that there are other significant differences between Asia-Pacific markets and the US and the UK. For example, though many Asia-Pacific markets have higher levels of communication technology adoption than the US and the UK, the levels of news participation are in many cases lower than those found in the US. This is a reminder that while digital technologies are a necessary condition for online news participation, they may not be a sufficient condition as media use is shaped by cultural norms, political context, and inherited media structures as well as by the development and diffusion of new technologies.

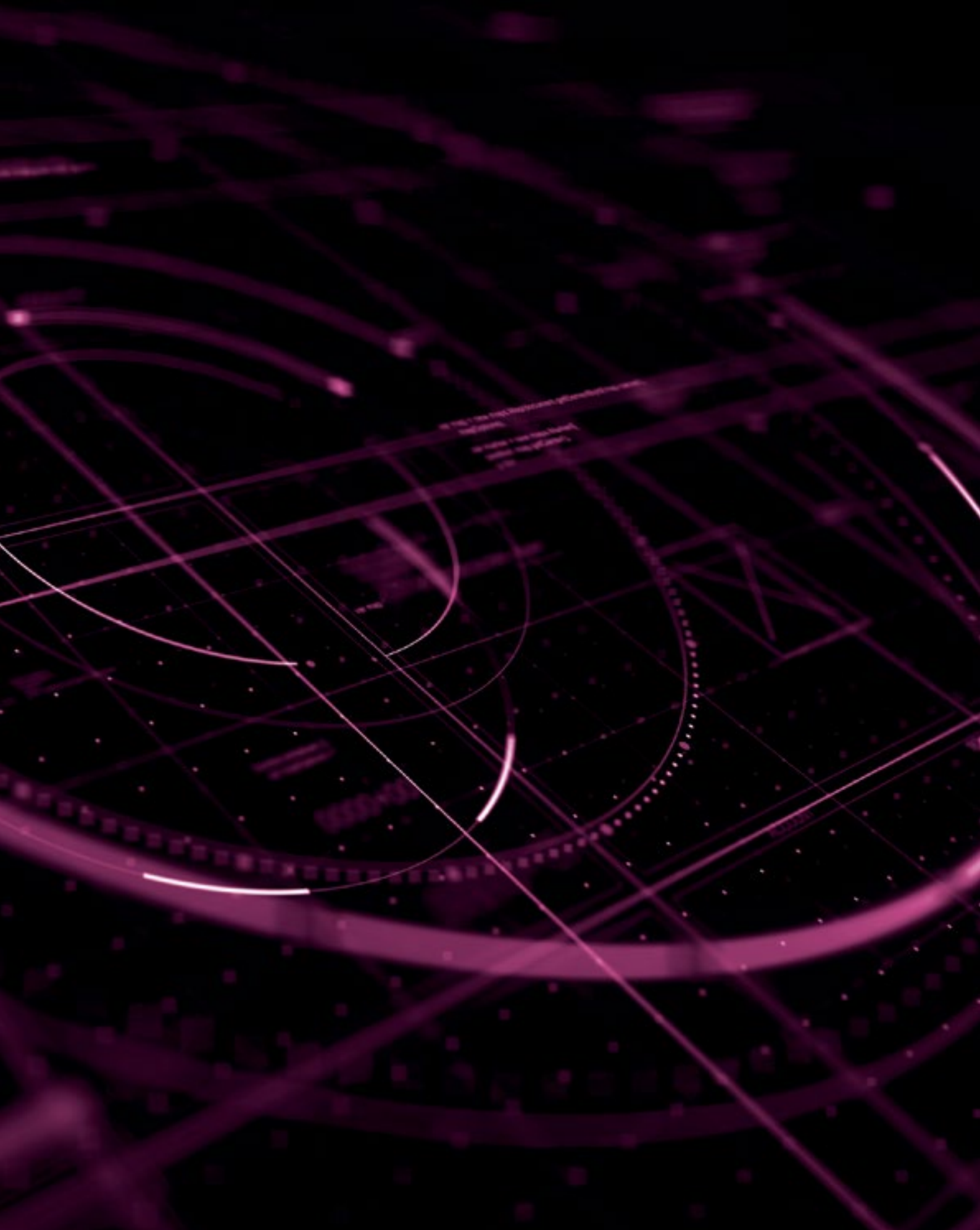
Beyond the similarities documented, it is clear that the Asia-Pacific region is no more monolithic or homogeneous than Europe or other regions are. Unsurprisingly, we find substantial variations within the region.

1. Within Asia-Pacific, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and Malaysia (at least for those who have internet access) seem to belong to the same tier of digitally oriented news markets. All four places witness widespread use of smartphones and social media (in particular Facebook) for news and active news engagement on social media (e.g. sharing news on social media). As we found in our pilot study in 2016, they provide one possible version of what a more digital, mobile-first, social-first media environment might look like.²⁴

Although Malaysia has the lowest GDP per capita among the markets covered in this report, people who have internet access are very sophisticated in their media and news use. Among internet users, the country has a similarly high level of smartphone adoption to Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore. More importantly, Malaysia actually has the highest percentage (over 90%) of respondents using social media for news in the Asia-Pacific region.

2. Within this group of digitally developed markets, we find that Hong Kong and Taiwan share many commonalities in news consumption habits. For example, a majority of respondents in both markets are hybrid news users, who consume text stories and video news. At the same time, text-only news users are also the fewest in both places. With regard to the ways of consuming online news, news users in Hong Kong and Taiwan like following live news pages within a website, watching online news videos, and using smartphone apps. That Hong Kong and Taiwan have many similarities in online news use is understandable given their geographical and cultural proximities. Frequent interactions (both offline and online) between the people in the two places may also yield shared news culture.
3. Japan is in many ways very different from other Asia-Pacific markets. It lags behind all other markets in terms of using smartphones, social media, and branded news websites/apps for news. This is similar to South Korea. In this regard, online news consumption in Japan and South Korea is more comparable to each other than to that of Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore. Nevertheless, there are some unique news-reading habits in Japan. For example, Japan's news users have a stronger preference for text stories over video news than the users in all other Asia-Pacific markets.
4. Besides Japan, Australia is also distinct from other Asia-Pacific markets. We find that Australia shares some similarities with other Asia-Pacific markets, but in many aspects it is actually closer to the UK and especially the US. Like the US, Australia has relatively lower levels of smartphone and social media use for news (as compared with Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and Malaysia). The two countries are also similar in how people come across news and consume news. Again, given Australia's history it is not surprising it has affinities with markets like the UK and the US.
5. Finally, apart from actual online news use, the several Asia-Pacific markets also exhibit differences in their evaluations of the news environment. Some Asia-Pacific markets (Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, and Australia) have higher levels of trust in the news, which are on par with the US and the UK. However, some others (Taiwan, South Korea, and Malaysia) have particularly low levels of trust in the news. These findings are intriguing. While Hong Kong is an undemocratic society and Singapore is well known for its stringent restrictions on the press, people in these two markets show greater trust in the news media than their counterparts in Taiwan and South Korea, which are both democratic societies. As noted above, people's trust in media and their perceptions of whether news is free from undue political and/or commercial influence are not directly aligned with outside observers' assessments of media freedom.

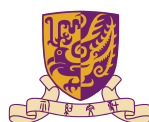
²⁴ See Pothong and Nielsen 2016: 21.





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