



News Audience Research Paper Award Winners 2014-2024

2024 News Audience Research Paper Award Winner

First Place

Out with the Old, in with the New: What Young Adults Think of the 'TikTokification' of News • Amanda Siew and Daniel Thompson, University of Oklahoma

Abstract: As TikTok become an increasingly popular source of news, more news practitioners are adopting it to reach younger audiences. This study aims to examine young adults' (aged 18-29) attitudes toward using TikTok as a news source, a perspective that has not been thoroughly examined in a scholarly context thus far. Focus group interviews with 14 young adults reveal their motivations behind using TikTok for news and how news practitioners should best reach this age group.

2023 News Audience Research Paper Award Winners

After two very different research papers about the news audience received exceptional reviews and almost perfect scores, it was decided to give the 2023 AEJMC News Audience Research Paper Award to two research papers. Abstracts of the 2023 winning papers are posted below.

First Place

Comparing Effects of News Subscription Motivation and News Lifestyle and Their Impact on Subscription Retention • Weiyue Chen, Butler, and Esther Thorson, Michigan State University

Abstract: This study employs a sample of American news subscribers (N=497), examining their motivations to pay for news, news lifestyle, and the likelihood of keeping their primary news subscriptions in the next three, six, and 12 months. We found motivations to support journalism and consumers' perception of greater gratification opportunities led to higher retention, whereas affordability motivation and news overload demonstrated a negative impact. Implications for how news companies can best maintain subscription revenue are elaborated.

AND

First Place

News for the Ages: An Examination of Trust Factors by Generational Cohort • Amy Jo Coffey and Chris DeFelice, University of Florida

Abstract: The relationship between age and news media trust is an urgent and unsettled question. A secondary analysis of data was conducted (N=13,540), revealing statistically significant differences between generational cohorts. Younger news consumers are paying greater attention to sources within stories, and the oldest news consumers are paying the least. Younger news consumers also view factors used in evaluating the trustworthiness of

news stories as more important than the older generations, suggesting greater skepticism or discernment.

2022 News Audience Research Paper Award Winner

First Place

The Diets of Newsjunkies: Intrinsic Need for Orientation and Hard News Consumption, Soft News Consumption, and Use of Partisan and Less-partisan News Outlets • Justin Martin, The Doha Institute for Graduate Studies, Doha, Qatar and Krishna Sharma, Northwestern University

Abstract: This study examined the newsjunkie characteristic, intrinsic need for orientation (INFO), as a predictor of hard news consumption, soft news consumption, use of partisan outlets, and use of less-partisan outlets, while controlling for news medium reliance, social media use, political partisanship, and demographics, among U.S. adults (N=2,059). Using uses and gratifications and self-determination theory as frameworks, the study hypothesized that INFO would positively predict hard news consumption (political, international, etc.) more strongly than it would predict soft news consumption (entertainment, sports, lifestyle/fashion news). This hypothesis was supported. INFO was the strongest predictor of hard news consumption and was a much stronger predictor of hard news use than of soft news use. The study also hypothesized that INFO would more strongly predict use of less-partisan news outlets than use of partisan news outlets, a hypothesis that was partially supported; the INFO characteristic was not associated with use of partisan FOX News, but was also a strong, positive correlate of using partisan MSNBC. Still, a strong INFO was predictive of getting news from less-partisan NBC, ABC, CNN, and BBC. Implications for research on uses and gratifications, the intrinsic need for orientation, and hard and soft news consumption are discussed.

2021 News Audience Research Paper Award Winner

First Place

Change Is the Only Constant: Young Adults as Platform Architects and the Consequences for News • Kjerstin Thorson and Ava Francesca Battocchio, Michigan State University

Abstract: We examine digital platform repertoires for news among young adults. Through the lens of “digital labor,” we explore the work that young adults’ undertake to design and maintain their personal media systems, and the consequences of those practices for news use. Drawing on 30 in-depth interviews with 18-34-year-olds, including a shared reading of participants’ newsfeeds in their top three social media platforms, we develop the theoretical concept of personal platform architecture. Our findings suggest that young adults architect and maintain platform repertoires for sociality, personal interests, and emotional well-being rather than for information—but with substantial consequences for news.

2020 News Audience Research Paper Award Winners

First Place

Relationships with News in the Modern Socio-Media Ecology • Carin Tunney, Michigan State

Abstract: This conceptual paper calls for a paradigm shift that considers the complexity and fluidity of today's news consumption beyond the snapshots of use captured in previous works. The paper elaborates upon three problems with today's news consumption research including measurement, ecological concerns, and assumptions of the inverse. The new paradigm incorporates relationship variables of satisfaction, interdependence, and endurance as a more robust method of measurement. Finally, new strategies to study consumption and avoidance are discussed.

AND

First Place

Audience Engagement with Individual News Organizations and Their News Content, and Influencing Factors • Jisu Kim, Yale Law School, and Jisu Huh, Minnesota

Abstract: Using survey data from the audience of six national news organizations in the United States, this article explores the influences of factors for audience engagement with the news organization at the organizational level. The result shows that familiarity with the news organization, frequency of getting news from the news organization, trust in the news in social media, trust in the news organization, and demographics affect audience engagement with news content and the news organization differently.

2019 News Audience Research Paper Award Winner

First Place

Effects of Bandwagon Cues and Automated Journalism on Reading, Commenting and Sharing of Real vs. False Information Online • Maria D. Molina, Jinping Wang, Thai Le, Carlina DiRusso, and S. Shyam Sundar, Penn State University

Abstract: Do social media users read, comment and share false news more than real news? Does their engagement with news depend on whether the source of the story is a staff writer or a bot, and whether the story is endorsed by many or only a few others in the network? We conducted a 2 (real vs. false news story) x 2 (staff writer vs. bot) x 2 (high vs. low bandwagon) experiment to find out.

2018 News Audience Research Paper Award Winner

First Place

News Finds Them, and Then What? How Post-Millennials Engage with Social and Mobile Media News • Anne Oeldorf-Hirsch, University of Connecticut; Preeti Srinivasan, University of Connecticut

Abstract: The reliance on social and mobile media for news is changing how young adults engage with and learn from news. Focus groups with current college students (N = 60) explore how they experience news via different media formats and how the content influences them. Results reveal social and mobile media as imperfect but unavoidable

convenience, a general hesitation to engage publicly with news content, and a sense of awareness of but not learning from news.

2017 News Audience Research Paper Award Winner

First Place

Multi-Platform News Use and Political Participation across Age Groups • Trevor Diehl, University of Vienna; Matthew Barnidge, University of Vienna; Homero Gil de Zúñiga, University of Vienna

Abstract: News consumption in today's media environment is increasingly characterized by multi-platform news; people now consume news across several multi-media devices. Relying on a nationally representative survey from the U.S., this study develops an index of multi-platform news use and tests its effects on age-group differences in the way people participate in politics. Results show that Millennials are more likely to rely on multi-platforms for news, which is positively related to alternative modes of public engagement.

2016 News Audience Research Paper Award Winners

First Place

Metrics, Clickbait, and the Anemic Audience: Audience Perceptions and Professional Values among News Aggregators • Mark Coddington, Washington and Lee University

Abstracts: Journalists have long been dismissive of their audiences, but the rise of online metrics and participatory journalism have challenged that attitude. This study examines that challenge by looking at aggregators' audience perception, exploring its influence on their news judgment and the role of metrics in their work. It finds that the audience weighs heavily on aggregators' work, but their conception of it is thin and non-participatory, mediated largely through the professionally contested tool of metrics.

Second Place

Local Newspaper Use in Hawaii Fosters Acculturation to Local Culture, Community Ties and Involvement • Francis Dalisay, University of Guam; Masahiro Yamamoto, University at Albany – SUNY; Chamil Rathnayake; Joanne Loos, University of Hawaii at Manoa; Kapiolani Ching, University of Hawaii at Manoa

Abstracts: We use the case of Hawaii to test a proposed mediation model positively linking local newspaper use with community ties (i.e., social cohesion and trust) and community involvement via acculturation to local culture. Findings revealed acculturation to local culture was associated with higher social cohesion, trust, and community involvement. Also, local newspaper use had an indirect positive association with sense of belonging, feelings of morale, social trust, and community involvement through its positive association with acculturation to local culture.

Third Place

Digital News Sharing: The Role of Influence and Habits in Social Media News Sharing • Samuel Tham, University of Missouri

Abstracts: 30% of Americans use social media for news. With news organizations seeking to harness more online news sharing from their viewers, questions are raised as to what

kinds of users share news on social media. This study proposes a model that examines the impact of technology leadership (social influence), news affinity, digital device use (habits), and the role of demographics to better understand the characteristics of users that share news on social media.

2015 News Audience Research Paper Award Winners

First Place

“I’m a news junkie. ... I like being informed...” Uses & Gratifications and Mobile News Users • Jacqueline Incollingo, Rider University

Abstract: A mixed methods research project combining quantitative survey results (n=632) with semi-structured interview data (n=30) explored how digital subscribers engage with mobile news, under the uses and gratifications framework. Themes of continuity indicate that motivations in traditional newspaper use remain salient in mobile news: information-seeking, the pleasure of reading, and powerful daily habits surrounding news use. Additional gratification concepts specific to tablet and smartphone news use, including mobility and the value of scaffolding, are suggested.

Second Place

How Political Talk and Political Efficacy Jointly Mediate the Impact of News Consumption on Political Participation? • Chang Sup Park, Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania

Abstract: This study suggests a two-step mediation model, which highlights the role of political talk and political efficacy in political communication. Based on two cross-sectional analyses and one auto-regressive analysis from the dataset of a two-wave panel survey during the 2012 presidential campaign in South Korea, this study finds that political discussion and political efficacy jointly mediate the impact of news consumption on political participation. Through involvement in the discussion with others, individual news consumers make more sense of the information obtained from the media and such sense-making are more likely to result in political participation through political efficacy. The result suggests that political talk and political efficacy jointly play a pivotal role in connecting citizens’ information-seeking behaviors to political participation. Additionally, this study finds that news consumption via online media and social media is significantly influential in triggering citizen engagement in political processes.

Third Place

The Buzz on BuzzFeed: Can readers learn the news from lists? • Tara Burton, University of Alabama and Chris Roberts, University of Alabama

Abstract: Among the Internet’s new forms of news delivery is BuzzFeed.com, which mixes information with humor using text blocks and unrelated images. This storytelling technique raises questions about information retention and credibility compared to traditional news messages and messengers. An experimental study on college-age students, using Elaboration Likelihood Model and credibility theories, compared a BuzzFeed story treatment to a USA Today treatment. Most participants preferred BuzzFeed but retained less information than traditional treatment. Implications are discussed.

2014 News Audience Research Paper Award Winners

Abstracts of the 2014 winning papers are posted below.

First Place:

Paper accepted by the AEJMC Communication Technology Division

“Break it to Me Gently: Twitter Bypasses Traditional Media for Breaking News, But Where Does it Lead People Next?” Edson Tandoc, Nanyang Technological University; **Erika Johnson**, University of Missouri

Abstract: This study sought to determine the news consumption pattern of college students by asking where respondents get breaking news and where this source leads them next. Guided by the framework of niche theory and theory of relative constancy, we predicted that social media, particularly Twitter, is displacing traditional news media at least for the gratification of learning about the news first. The findings based on an online survey (N=224) supported this general assumption.

Second Place:

Paper accepted by the AEJMC Media Management & Economics Division

“Is Traditional Media Losing Audience?” Qianni Luo, Ohio University

Abstract: This study sought to determine several variables that may influence people's choice to shift from old to new media. This included time spent on social activities, the structure of traditional media, the user's gender, and use of social media. Based on the theory of uses and gratifications, logic of media economics, and time budget theory, all those variables potentially influence people's choice of the Internet over traditional media. A secondary data retrieved from Pew Research Center's 2012 media consumption survey was used in this project. Twelve questions from the questionnaire regarding people's media usage were mainly analyzed in this article. The results indicate that time spent on social activities, gender and the structure of newspapers influence time spent on the Internet.

Third Place (tie):

Paper accepted by the AEJMC Community Journalism Interest Group

“Seeing Community Journalism in Online News: Examining Status Conferral Processes in Digital Media Organizations” Myles Ethan Lascity, Drexel University

Abstract: Many scholars have hailed blogs and citizens journalists as a means of upending the traditional journalistic structure, however, users appear to prefer to channel their input through established media outlets. Few have attended to the question of why audiences – citizen journalists or causal readers – share news with established organizations when they could easily distribute the information themselves. This paper will argue that the same processes at the heart of community journal can help explain why individuals choose to align themselves with organizations rather than strike out on their own.

Third Place (tie):

Paper accepted by the AEJMC Electronic News Division

“The Rise of Online News Aggregators: Consumption and Competition” Angela M. Lee, University of Texas at Dallas; **H. Iris Chyi**, University of Texas at Austin

Abstract: While traditional news firms continue to struggle online, news aggregators (i.e., Yahoo News, Google News and the Huffington Post) have become a major source of news for American audiences. Through a national survey of 1,143 U.S. Internet users, this study

(1) offers an in-depth look at the composition of news aggregator users, (2) proposes a theoretical model that examines demographic and psychological predictors of aggregator use, and (3) uncovers non-competitive relationships between three major news aggregators and major TV, print and social media news outlets. Such findings are at odds with industry sentiment, or hostility toward news aggregators and call for a reassessment of the role of news aggregators in today's media landscape.