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Daniel, Anna and Flew, Terry and Spurgeon, Christina (2009) *User behaviours and intentions with digital news media in Australia*. In: *Transforming Audiences 2 ; Creativity, Knowledge, Participation*, 3-4 September, 2009, University of Westminster, London. (Submitted (not yet accepted for publication))

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# User Behaviours and Intentions with Digital News Media in Australia

Paper presented to the  
2009 Communication and Media Research Institute (CAMRI) Conference:  
*Transforming Audiences 2*  
3-4 September, 2009, University of Westminster, London UK

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## **Abstract**

This paper summarises findings from a survey of user behaviours and intentions towards digital media and information in Australia. It was undertaken in the first quarter of 2009 by the Queensland University of Technology Creative Industries Faculty and was funded by the Smart Services Cooperative Research Centre. The survey targeted users of 2 news and information sites that are available online only. Findings highlighted differences between the 18-24 year age segment and older users. Social networks (specifically friends and family) were rated as the least reliable, relevant and accurate sources of news. Other findings indicate online news sources that are associated with an established newspaper are highly valued as reliable, relevant and accurate news sources by most people.

While most people prefer to use online news sources, there is a great deal of variation in the ways in which people actually use online news. From a total of 524 respondents to the survey it was possible to identify three main types of online news consumers: convenience, loyal and customising users.

**Keywords:** Internet, young adults, digital news, new media, online news, news users, user studies, media use

## ***Rationale***

The rise of social media and the participative web have challenged traditional news media (OECD 2007). In particular, confusion exists over the use of news online by young adults in Australia (ACMA 2008). Media content has disaggregated across platforms and “it is the loss of control over the format and timing of information that poses the true challenge to traditional media” (Miel and Faris, 2008: 5). The key to the success of any media is the consumer experience. What are the expectations and attitudes of digital news consumers today? Their use of news media is evolving rapidly and so a ‘pulse check’ of consumer behaviors and perceptions towards online news and information is warranted in order to tailor services to address their needs.

## ***Methodology***

This paper summarises key findings of a survey of consumer behavior and intentions towards online news, undertaken in the first quarter of 2009. It was interested specifically in users of online news, and so was framed by a case study of 2 sites that are only available online – the Brisbane Times (a city news site), and the Vine (a national site aimed at 18-29 year olds).

To fit this case study, the target demographic included people aged over 18 years living in South East Queensland and secondly, young adults nationwide. The survey was advertised on publicly available websites that targeted this demographic including the Brisbane Times, The Vine, MAP Magazine, Crikey and a variety of social chat boards that focus on either south east Queensland or the national young adult demographic. The survey was promoted heavily to Queensland University of Technology Creative Industries Faculty students, many who may represent lead users for the 18-24 year segment. The advertisement asked, “Do you access news online” and a prize incentive was offered. A bias is inbuilt in that this was an online survey, so it may be assumed that respondents are

comfortable with online sources. Some direct quotes used in this report have been edited to correct spelling and grammar.

### ***Respondent demographics***

There was a 100 per cent completion rate and high quality of responses to the survey, with 524 respondents. A close alignment between survey respondents and demographics of the Brisbane Times and The Vine was achieved. Half of respondents were aged 18-24 years old, 30 per cent were 25-39 years and 20 per cent aged over 40 years. 60 per cent were female. Half were students, 30 per cent were in professional occupations and the remainder were evenly balanced between manual labour, unemployed, retirees, homecare, and business owners. The least represented group were trades, capturing only 1 per cent of the occupation segment. In all, 79 per cent of respondents are achieving or hold tertiary qualifications, 3 per cent have apprenticeships and 18 per cent completed high school. This education level appears to correlate with the Fairfax readership demographic.

74 per cent of the respondents live in Queensland, with roughly 67 per cent from South East Queensland. Of the 26 per cent from outside Queensland, 16 per cent were aged under 39 years and 10 per cent may have accessed the survey via advertisements on national sites such as Crikey. Therefore 90 per cent of the survey respondents were directly relevant to the target demographics of the case studies (potential users of the Brisbane Times or The Vine).

### ***How news is accessed***

Overwhelmingly news is accessed most often in the home. Most respondents access news via wireless broadband/wifi or cable broadband. The findings correlate with the ACMA (2008) survey of internet usage so will not be expanded upon in detail here. Lack of speed on sites remains an issue, but less an issue than expected. Some may *"read the news perhaps whilst another page loads or I am waiting for something to download."* Another mentioned news sites are *"only useful if they are not massive video files. I can't stand*

*waiting for a short story to load.”* Someone nominated the text version of a newspaper site as their favourite because its full media site runs slowly and is “*ad infested*”.

Respondents believe online is the best format for news and information (relevance, accuracy, reliability), with 44 per cent of respondents voting it their favourite source of information. Magazines were clearly not a favourite source of news and information (with 43 per cent voting magazines as their least preferred source). Perhaps this may be due to their comparatively high price point.

Someone noted a preference for digital news because it is current and “*breaking*”. This will be discussed in more detail later, but when compared with other news platforms, most news recipients obtain their news online first:

*I often find that television, radio and newspapers will copy a story from the internet 1 day to a week after I have already read it on the internet.*

*If I buy a daily newspaper, I usually find I've read all the articles online the NIGHT before.*

*If I pick up a print newspaper, I have already read the articles online. The ability to have news as it happens and keep updated throughout the day means that if I miss the news on TV at night, I am not in the dark about what is happening in the world.*

A benefit of online news is “*seeing the time it was uploaded*” so that they can judge how recent it is. Others noted issues around physical newspapers, with a preference for online news “*without all that nasty newspaper ink getting all over me!*” Two others noted that newspapers are “*messy*” to read. Three respondents commented on the eco-friendliness of online news, or it is “*more environmental because it's not using paper.*” Those who do read newspapers may do so for the “*tactile benefit*” of the paper as artefact or as “*a bit of a ritual*” or because:

*I prefer hardcopy newspaper as it seems more relaxing because you aren't at a computer.*

*Sitting in front of a TV or on a couch with a paper is more enjoyable than looking at a computer screen.*

Real-time online was also seen to have an advantage over television:

*I feel I am way ahead and rarely have to watch TV and I can screen what I want.*

*'Real time' (TV/Radio) is just one time-constrained interpretation.*

Which news sources are most reliable? Not surprisingly, online news is the most relied upon source across age groups, although this result may not correlate to the wider community because it arose from an online news survey. Online news reliance generally skews towards the younger segment while those who rely on newspapers skew older. Age is an important indicator of choice preferences: radio is the second preference of the 55+ year age group, but all other age segments prefer newspapers. Relying upon news received from conversations is preferred to physical newspapers by 18-24 year olds whereas none of the other age segments rely on news via conversations. It appears that family and friends (social networks) were not valued for these qualities. Magazines were the least favoured for reliability, relevance and accuracy of news and information. Someone mentioned the synergy between mediums: *“As soon as I hear something on the radio I can follow it up online.”*

28 per cent of respondees across age groups considered mobile devices their least preferred way to access online news, and 36 per cent have never tried it. This reported low interest in news via mobile devices needs further analysis. It may simply be due to a lack of awareness, which is correlated by the 'never tried' result. One person commented online news is *“quickly becoming more mobile as well so that increases the convenience.”* This presents an opportunity to deepen the penetration of news services via mobiles, and improve the convenience and speed of news, thereby enhancing the consumer experience.

Reasons for preferring online news were analysed and revealed the following patterns:

- It is fast and current

- It is convenient
- It contains links to relevant sites
- It can search multiple sources simultaneously to get multiple viewpoints
- It contains multimedia – video, audio, photos and text.

These patterns are illustrated by a sample of quotes provided below in which respondents described benefits and challenges in online news.

It's fast:

*Breaking news and updates are critical but do contribute to the noise. Sometimes feel overwhelmed but I love the immediacy.*

*Timely--accurate -ability to expand on original flash report (or correct)--followed by in depth review of events.*

*Consistently useful: the most updated, especially with RSS Feeds. However, sometimes inaccurate and must be followed due to continual updates. A story is very rarely complete online in comparison to newspapers.*

*I don't receive newspapers & they're out of date when you buy them anyway, online is updated all the time, so it's always quite current.*

The 2009 Victorian bushfires, which occurred in the month before this survey was launched, highlighted the importance of breaking news: “*Very helpful if you need current information on an "I need to know now"*” basis. However as someone else pointed out, “*As long as you have electricity, they are very useful!*”

It's convenient:

*There at a touch of the keyboard it's too easy.*

*I can get up to the date information when and where I want.*

*Easy to access and digest while on the run. Lacks detail and breadth.*

*People often don't have time to sit down and read a newspaper before or after work etc., online news is quick and easy to access.*

*You don't have to go the newsagency and buy a paper to find out the news, you just sit in your office and click away. Easy.*

It links:

*Most articles do not contain relevant links to sources or accompanying pictures / videos, although it's mildly getting better.*

*Good because you can link to/search for background info or Google more information.*

*Online sources "are useful but often confusing to search."*

It enables easy access to multiple sources, therefore multiple viewpoints:

*They provide more than one opinion and one point of view.*

*It is "easy to check other sites for accuracy" or "they're probably the most useful because they can be cross referenced quickly and easily with other sources."*

*More often than not, you can eventually find the original source.*

*You get many viewpoints from different involvements in events. Not always Western biased or with agenda.*

*The best thing about online news is that I can ignore some but read others in greater detail.*

*Absolutely essential, they cover all the news stories, in detail, not just the highlights that the free to air media picks up.*

*They allow for various alternative views in the one outlet.*

*All news is bias - it depends entirely on who is delivering the news and how straight forward the facts are. Online is useful when wanting to explore the news and compare.*

*Varied information about the same news event. In the end you decide.*

*The only con is that there are many different versions of any one story which makes it hard to believe any.*

*It's hard to find accurate ones, a lot of them contradict each other.*

*Only one person noted a favourite news site was because it "is more likely to express a viewpoint that I share."*

It can be multimedia:

*They also have more videos and pictures you can look at too.*

*Online news sources are only useful when they provide information that can't be easily produced in other media.*

*Online sites have unlimited space and means to deliver, text, image, audio and video so you get more of the news and opinions.*

A key comment that summarised why online news is the preferred medium was:

*Quick to access and you can read about an issue from various points of view, both local and international, from different political points of view and personal points of view as this varies between journalists. Also, you can read about a topic across various genres that might treat it with varying levels of formality, depth etc. This enables the development of a more well-rounded opinion and can also let you tailor what you read to your mood, level of interest etc.*

Someone offered the following comment on why online is preferred to television and radio: *"I am able to sort through all the crap that doesn't interest me very quickly."* Others commented that users can *"filter out the information I don't want"* and *"removing most irrelevant information."* It appears people like the control to seek and *"filter"* online news compared to passively receiving news via television, radio or to a lesser extent newspapers: *"I have control over the news I want and the depth of knowledge about that news event I wish to pursue."*

Someone noted online is *"generally not for detailed analysis of events - newspapers, blogs, and current affairs programs provide more detail than real-time news sources."* Another said that in the digital environment *"types of wording can always bring prejudice into a political situation (for example) whereas on the radio is appears as clear facts."* However another commented digital is *"not just a 30 sec grab like radio"*.

### **Content**

In contrast to other news content, for local news people are more likely to rely upon friends and family: 19 per cent rely upon friends and 13 per cent rely upon digital sources. The 13 per cent who rely upon digital sources may live in inner urban areas, where digital sources are more prevalent. At least 68 per cent of respondents go to a news/information site to maintain currency with world events. 19 per cent want entertainment, gossip, lifestyle events and/or sports information. However a few cautioned they perceive some news sites simply process media releases:

*They are very hit and miss, almost as if the article came straight off a press release.*

*It's all the same stories- just different formats & it gets boring!*

*Sometimes there are multiple versions of same story.*

*Often they are paraphrased/copied from other international articles.*

*They usually are puff pieces.*

*The concern is when different news sites report the same story but with information changed.*

*Take everything I read here with a grain of salt and assume it is tabloid news rewritten.*

Several respondents have trust issues:

*Useful as a starting point but I do not trust them.*

*A lot of the time information is made up.*

*It is hard to find stories that they aren't advertising.*

*It is important to always use these sources critically, as their accuracy cannot always be assumed.*

***Do consumers rely upon known brands or mastheads in their selection of news?***

71 per cent agreed they tend to use online news and information services that are also associated with other news media (paper, television etc.). 84 per cent of respondents firstly go to the home page before clicking on something of interest, as opposed to going directly to a specific part of the site or going via a newsfeed or email. This needs further analysis because Google use was prevalent across all users. It suggests the importance of the site homepage, however it may be that users are directed automatically to that home page when signing out of email or social network sites. Professional news brands are highly valued across all age segments and this intensifies with age up to 54.

The perceived quality of online news is clearly an issue, or “*you need to use a reliable source.*” Consumers need news they can trust, as per the comments relating to trust issues above. Many respondents noted the dichotomy between news currency and accuracy:

*They're extremely useful because of their immediacy, but that aspect also makes them less accurate. The more immediate, the less easily verified.*

But “*if it is from the right site, then the news is trustworthy and credible.*” Whether news sites with a long history and established brand are a positive or negative factor in relation to trust was unclear. Someone commented, “*sometimes they're dodgy,*” and “*take nothing as gospel.*” The BBC enjoys a strong masthead (this will be discussed later): “*reputable ones such as BBC.com*” are “*very useful. Most others tend to be too compromised.*”

Other comments included:

*When you cross analyse online sources amongst major to minor sites, it is easier to figure out the truth from the rubbish.*

*I need an alternative point of view from the rubbish that the mainstream media call 'news'.*

*I am still wary of trusting the information that is supplied through them, I guess I haven't gotten past the taboo of internet information.*

*Fairly reliable and useful because they are usually heavily linked to newspapers and other sources that are reliable on their own.*

An 18-24 year user noted: *If it's a professional news site like ninemsn then it can be very useful.*

*Very useful for people who want to read past the propaganda we are fed by the corrupt people who hold the majority of power in the world.*

*Any corporate media is flawed, how else could wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, toppled governments and bailouts occur without mass rioting in the streets?*

*Corporate Media is flawed, it broadcasts a distorted view of the world. The news consumer must be vigilant in delving deeper to discover the truth.*

*Unfortunately the majority of information, no matter the ... site is ultimately hosted by a very narrow range of companies & owners.*

*Mainstream media is far too commercially driven, too much corporate spin, need media with non-commercial agenda.*

*I'm not always interested in news outlets' headlines - their online sources allow me to dig down into finer detail on subjects that may not have a wide audience.*

*The news services provided by major media publishers are the most useful as their stories have been through the usual accuracy checks.*

*Many old media that have migrated to the net have the trustworthy reputation but they tend to want to publish very quickly and their facts can be wrong because of the rush to be first (last night the first reports of the cricketer shooting said the Australian coach was badly hurt on news.com.au).*

*I tend to use those online news and information services that are also associated with other news media, for example, ABC.net.au or TheAge.com.au.*

### ***Making online news choices***

A question arising from ACMA (2008) data was whether and why younger users (aged 18-24) access news online. Responses indicated 18-24 year olds access news most often out of habit (33 per cent) and/or by default (23 per cent): *"It gives me a brief summary of the top stories, before I check my Hotmail."* However they do seek out event driven news (28 per

cent), and we suggest these choices may relate to social events. 37 per cent of respondents aged 18-24 years had Facebook as their favourite website. Someone commented that the Courier Mail was their favourite news site because of an *“easy link to Facebook to share articles.”*

The high proportion of respondents who have never accessed news via a mobile device has been noted, however 12 per cent currently access news via their mobile most often, and 27 per cent said they sometimes access news via a mobile device. This may indicate that those who have tried news via mobile devices continue to do so. The iPhone featured at least three times as a reason why particular sites are a favourite, for example news.com.au was someone’s favourite news site because it is *“easy to use on my iPhone”*. Mobile news users may have mobile plans paid by their employer. This segment may respond favourably to brand marketing of news on mobile devices.

RSS feeds were mentioned by a small proportion of users:

*I pull in everything I want via RSS so I have my own news source with just everything I want really.*

The low use of news aggregators may be due to a lack of awareness. Those who do use aggregators indicated they are easier and more comprehensive. However someone cautioned:

*They can be inaccurate, and opinion is often mixed in with content. Aggregator sources like digg.com are fun to read but often loaded with misinformation.*

### ***Favourite sites***

News sites that are linked to email (ninemsn, yahoo news etc.) were nominated by 29 per cent of respondents as their favourite sites. Ninemsn was clearly the most favourite digital news site and this will be discussed in the next section. The ABC has one of the strongest online Australian brands and it was noted for its:

*Independent journalism.*

*Higher quality news.*

*Being close to politically neutral.*

*Objective, informative, non-sensationalised news.*

*With no advertising or flash!*

*Media watch on the ABC does a good job of debunking the rubbish they feed us.*

*I like their integration of AV, sound and 'print' media. I listen to ABC podcasts as well, so I like the crossover.*

*It filters out a lot of the "crappy" news (i.e.: celebrity stuff) and sums up the top stories in a short, simple and clear paragraph. The authors aren't "wanna be" journalists, they know their information and how to present it to their audience.*

*Simple but functional design, integrated with ABC online features, analysis and channels.*

*Some strong 'brand names' - ABC, BBC - can still be counted on. Some newspapers have yet to adapt effectively.*

Those who nominated the Brisbane Times as their favourite news site mentioned a key strength was its local content coverage:

*Good local Brisbane news content. Has Queensland news section as well as other (National, international, sport etc).*

*It provides up-to-date local news throughout the day.*

*It's easy to navigate and has relevant stories. It's local, but also includes national and international news. The blogs and opinions are also very interesting.*

*The site is compact, flexible and has updated daily local, national and world news. It also has news on the social activities in Brisbane and what is happening in Brisbane.*

Overseas news brands (BBC, Sina etc.) comprised 6 per cent of favourite news sites:

*BBC has the best non-partial news service on the web, and because it has a large physical news service behind it.*

*The website's BBC iPlayer offers dedicated music channels, comprehensive world news and thought-provoking, informative discussions on religion, science and other issues affecting western society.*

*BBC has the widest and closest to unbiased coverage, coupled with the journalists' ability to write in correct English, mostly.*

*I love the layout and design of The Guardian. I also like the journalism and the respected writers that contribute to the paper. Typographically it is superb.*

iGoogle also came in for praise:

*Because I can pick what news is most important to me and what I'm interested in and I can click and drag it to organise it to my needs.*

*Google reader is a simply way to keep track of all of my favourite sites, blogs and other resources, and therefore my MOST favourite!*

*It provides links to many other news stories. I feel I can access a broader range of perspectives.*

*I pull in everything I want via RSS so I have my own news source with just everything I want really.*

Someone who listed “RSS Feeds from independent blogs and news sources” said it is due to “I can subscribe all news feeds and blogs to appear on iGoogle so I get updates whenever I go to my home page.”

*Gives you the option of researching into the news in more depth, instead of just receiving one story, for example from the evening news.*

*Diversity and a customised approach to news. Lets me use non-partisan news sources I trust and find interesting.*

Twitter appeared in four responses as the favourite news site, however they may have been referring to news sites accessed via Twitter, for example <http://twitter.com/nytimes> was noted as a favourite:

*Twitter is the most up-to-date system but is probably very inaccurate.*

*Twitter is good for aggregating immediate news, via tags etc but social trends are as farcical as the editing on online news sites in Australia generally. But as observational news ...they... are no less valid than the ABC, News Limited etc. See the CFA twitter bushfire as an example.*

*This is because I can receive feeds from my friends, favourite celebrities and even news sites! In other words - it is the best site to use if you want to be on top of everything of interest to you.*

### **News and email**

Of those who nominated ninemsn as their favourite news site, 84 per cent were aged between 18-24. The high percentage of email related sites nominated as favourite news

sites may reflect users who access news by default, that is, when they log out of email sites they are automatically redirected to it, or it appears onscreen while they are on social network sites. The 'stickiness' of digital news seems to be on par with their addiction to online social activities:

*To be able to look at breaking news while checking emails and being on the computer is great.*

*It's easy to access and it comes up every time I log out of msn so I won't forget it.*

*Pops up when I am on Instant messenger so I can easily get to it while doing something I enjoy like talking to my friends.*

*Every time i sign into messenger to talk to friends or check emails, a window pops up and gives me headlines of the day in relation to specific areas - which I can personalise to my tastes. From this I got into the habit of using ninemsn and found it's a very easy to use site with reliable and informative news.*

*I don't usually go searching for news. However, I am an avid user of HOTMAIL!!! and yeah the thingy just shows up whenever I sign on and it somehow gets me interested into it.*

*Easy to understand as online users are "scanning" the screen instead of reading the news online.*

### ***The relevance of digital news***

Respondents overwhelmingly believed they spend most time online looking at content concerning: real time breaking news, news and current affairs, and entertainment. Editorial/opinion also rated highly overall. So too did the promise of interaction, for example in the form of comments and uploading photos – even if that functionality is never actually used. 75 per cent indicated they want to comment or submit content and 78 per

cent enjoy opinion pieces and blogs. The 'interactivity' aspects of news will be discussed in more detail later.

With regards to news localities (local, national and international), national news is the most sought after type of news. Interest in local news grows by age group - as people age they become more interested in local news. News from international sites was of less interest, but for a small group of respondents it is important, as apparent in comments:

*I have lived overseas and source information on my old home towns via online services.*

*I've recently started reading online news about Africa, Indonesia, Japan, Korea and the Pacific. Their stories don't appear in the Age and I can't easily get them anywhere easily.*

Results indicated a need for online news in isolated communities, but this needs further analysis. Someone nominated the local community paper as their favourite news site:

*I get the all the local news at a time that suits my lifestyle. There's no delivery out here so without "online" I'm out of the loop.*

A retired respondent wrote online news is *very easy to obtain and usually accurate and up to date and report world wide, Australia and state news. Not good at local news.*

A home carer aged 25-39 wrote: *Find them very useful for state-wide and national relevance, but can't say I have ever actually used a local online news source - maybe one exists?*

Another noted the need for news: *in regional Australia the papers arrive late so often online is best ...and ... the most useful news for people living in rural areas who do not have access to local or daily newspapers.*

*Being regional doesn't mean a closed mind.*

*It is nice to read something mostly appropriate to where I live.*

### ***Interactivity and consumer input to news***

The desire for interactivity, although not a focus of this study, came through in some comments, with a sample of comments below. A key theme was the desire by some users to add their opinions and reactions to news items:

*In response to whether online information sources are useful, someone wrote it: depends if you can discuss or comment on issues in the news that affect us.*

*The community at Twitter is a great judge of important news, if my followers link something, it's probably relevant.*

*They are free versions of what is included in print, with colourful pictures, plus blogging comments and links to relevant data and other articles.*

*I like clicking on related links and I enjoy reading comments. I don't think I can ever return to hard copy sources.*

*Better because it almost feels as if it's breaking news all the time so it makes you feel a part of the news team.*

*They allow anyone at any time to access stories that are of interest and then in an instant swap to something relevant or miles away.*

*Comments sections can quickly point out flaws in an article.*

*Perhaps, for the moment, online sources are better on comment than news, but they're useful in both sense.*

*Useful as long as one knows how to assess their reliability and how to detect the effects of, for example, groupthink among blog authors.*

*They allow for people to discuss the news with other people around the country and world. We live in a global community and therefore we now need to be able to converse on news matters with people around the world.*

*A site was mentioned as a favourite because it has a great community of commenters and posters. There is witty, salon talk and serious policy debate to suit one's mood.*

*Because local issues are discussed by everyday people, can't talk back to a TV now can we?*

### **Typologies**

Respondents might be segmented into three typologies: convenience, loyal and customisers. The three categories of users are not mutually exclusive. For example many loyal users may also customise their use. All users enjoy an element of convenience.

Convenience users usually arrive at online news sites in direct response to a mechanic such as a link that has been pushed out to them (*"it pops up"*) via a social network or email application. Convenience users constitute 60 per cent of respondents in this survey and typically they are students aged 18-24 years. They are highly active users of news sites because they are highly active email, messenger and social network users. They tend to enjoy *"short and concise"* *"glossy"* *"gossipy type things"* *"trashy"* *"weird but freaky"* and *"glamorous"* news that is *"easily read ... without devoting too much time"*. They may use news to be *"occupied when bored"*, or seek *"mind numbing after a busy day"*. A key point of differentiation is that convenience users are not tied to the news brand, for example, if their email provider defaulted to a different news provider they may not notice and secondly they would not seek out that news brand when an event occurs. At present,

online news sources most effectively reach convenience users through digital direct response communication techniques. Systematic arrangements, established in the context of partnerships with search or social network media, seem to have a significant influence on the online news consumption choices of convenience users. It appears these users do not attribute as high a value to news received by default than other users who seek it out.

A second group is those who know the physical media brand and go online to that brand. Loyal users are more intentional users of online news sources, who are loyal to a brand, for instance the ABC or Fairfax sites. They value the reputation of news organisations and return to favourite online news sources out of habit or seek out the site to follow breaking news. Typically, loyal users are persons aged over 24 years and comprise about 31 per cent of respondents. They are faithful to established news and information brands. While they do not necessarily want to interact with news brands they certainly value the existence of the potential to participate in shaping and communicating the core values of their preferred news brands within and beyond the brand. These users may respond to the development of brand communities around news brands. Activities such as 'citizen journalism' may be included at one end of the spectrum of brand community-building applications and activities, but more likely, this group is more interested in lower-level interactive engagements which enhance the 'stickiness' of a brand and which can occur away from the main news 'pages', such as comments on stories and uploading images.

Our final typology is active 'customising' users, who are active lead edge users of news applications. Typically, this group of users is professionals aged over 24 years and it comprised about 9 per cent of respondents. They believe:

*You can find a mix of well-researched articles and opinion pieces (eg from blogs as well as online news). However most national online papers are dumbed down and not much more than entertainment magazines.*

Customising users are distinguished from loyal users by their interest in automating and customising the process of pulling news from a variety of sources, and interacting, manipulating and spreading it across their social networks. They tend to favour RSS feeds, news aggregators and may also be early adopters of mobile platforms for receiving news.

Customising users may also make use of brand community tools, especially if they support the 'spreadability' of the customising user's identity across the internet, as well as aggregation in the brand community (for example, social media-style user profiles where information about media consumption habits might be consolidated, and where customised media streams from a variety of sources might be aggregated and controlled by the end-user). Like loyal users, customising users may have significant value as brand promotion agents in social networks. For the purpose of Audience Market Foresight research they are also potentially important sources of insight into lead user behaviours in relation to the development on online news and information services.

Segmenting users by age group within these three typologies reveals greater insights. The different approaches to news may lead to the levels of satisfaction that users feel: "*it's all the same stories- just different formats & it gets boring!*" versus "*access is completely customisable*" and they get what they want when they want it.

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