

Innovation in News Media World Report

2020

Editors
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An annual survey by INNOVATION Media Consulting Group
for the World Association of News Publishers (WAN-IFRA)



World Association
of News Publishers

Innovation in News Media World Report

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INNOVATION

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GROWTH STRATEGIES · DIGITAL · NEWSROOMS · DESIGN

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The New(s) Abnormal

A Note from the Editors

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WELCOME TO THE NEW ABNORMAL! We got here faster than we expected, with trends that would have taken five years to become the norm now becoming the standard in a space of a few months. But how do we adapt to take the momentum forward, even as we start to put the pandemic behind us and emerge from our stumbled upon 'home offices'? Face-to-face journalism, not Facebook, or desktop journalism after all, is what creates journalism that is worth paying for. And people are willing to pay. There is

finally a global recognition that independent, quality journalism is valuable and for publishers around the world, it has translated into a surge in online subscriptions. We have advocated for long that reader revenue should comprise at least 40% of a sustainable digital revenue model and there has never been a better time to make that a reality. It means a focus not just on acquiring new subscribers but on keeping the ones you have for a long time.

While this new impetus to subscription takes centre stage, diversification remains vital. We urge publishers to try three or four of the thirteen revenue models we outline in our first chapter. In almost every category, we are pleased to note, there is new verve and enterprise – ten years of preparation for the digital age and the skills and lessons learnt coming to fruition all at once. Live event businesses, thought to be the most susceptible to the pandemic, have been reimaged as vibrant virtual event series. The boom in e-commerce has seen publishers vie to become a part of each stage of the consumer's purchasing journey, while a thirst for online education has seen an expansion of courses and partnerships with universities and online education providers. Archives of historical coverage are being allied to blockchain technology to be sold as 'moments', and even as larger ecosystem changes loom, like the phasing out of third party cookies, publishers are rapidly working on sophisticated first party data plays to offer value to advertisers.

We update our chapter on paywall models this year to tell a story of how

publishers have parlayed the sharp spike in news in interest during the pandemic to attract new readers, understand more audience behaviour and preferences and evolve a dynamic system by which they are invited to subscribe or register. We expect all paywall models to migrate toward this hybrid system. In acknowledging that there is no one-size-fits-all model comes the realisation that an effective subscription strategy requires collaboration across various teams, from editorial, product, data and marketing.

The key also lies in understanding what content might trigger a subscription and resonate most with audiences, which we explore in another chapter. Long term investments in areas like science journalism have paid obvious dividends for publishers, as has the ability to react to news and deliver content across different mediums – podcasts, pop-up newsletters, live blogs and instant analyses. We also give an overview of some of the most interesting experiments in digital product innovation across the board – be it to increase subscriptions, ease workflows within newsrooms or keep audiences engaged.

Extraordinary news events bring their share of misinformation and falsehoods, spread on social media and other channels. Our role as fact-checkers, in these times, is the new added value to our journalism and could prove to be an effective revenue stream. In recent years a plethora of independent fact checking operations have come up around the world but there are some distinct advantages to setting up a full-fledged fact checking unit within a traditional newsroom. We detail some best practices from around the world, along with some tips and advice on setting up such a unit.

Finally, we tie it all together with a round-up of the best marketing campaigns

to sell news and convince readers to pay. Following a year that was the most tumultuous in recent memory, readers around the world looked for information they could trust, from sources who knew and understood their communities and regions. In offering that sense of clarity amidst the chaos, news organisations found an opportunity to renew a contract with their readers. It is also a reminder, as we look to the challenges and opportunities ahead, of one of our oldest maxims: only journalism will save journalism.

Happy reading! ●

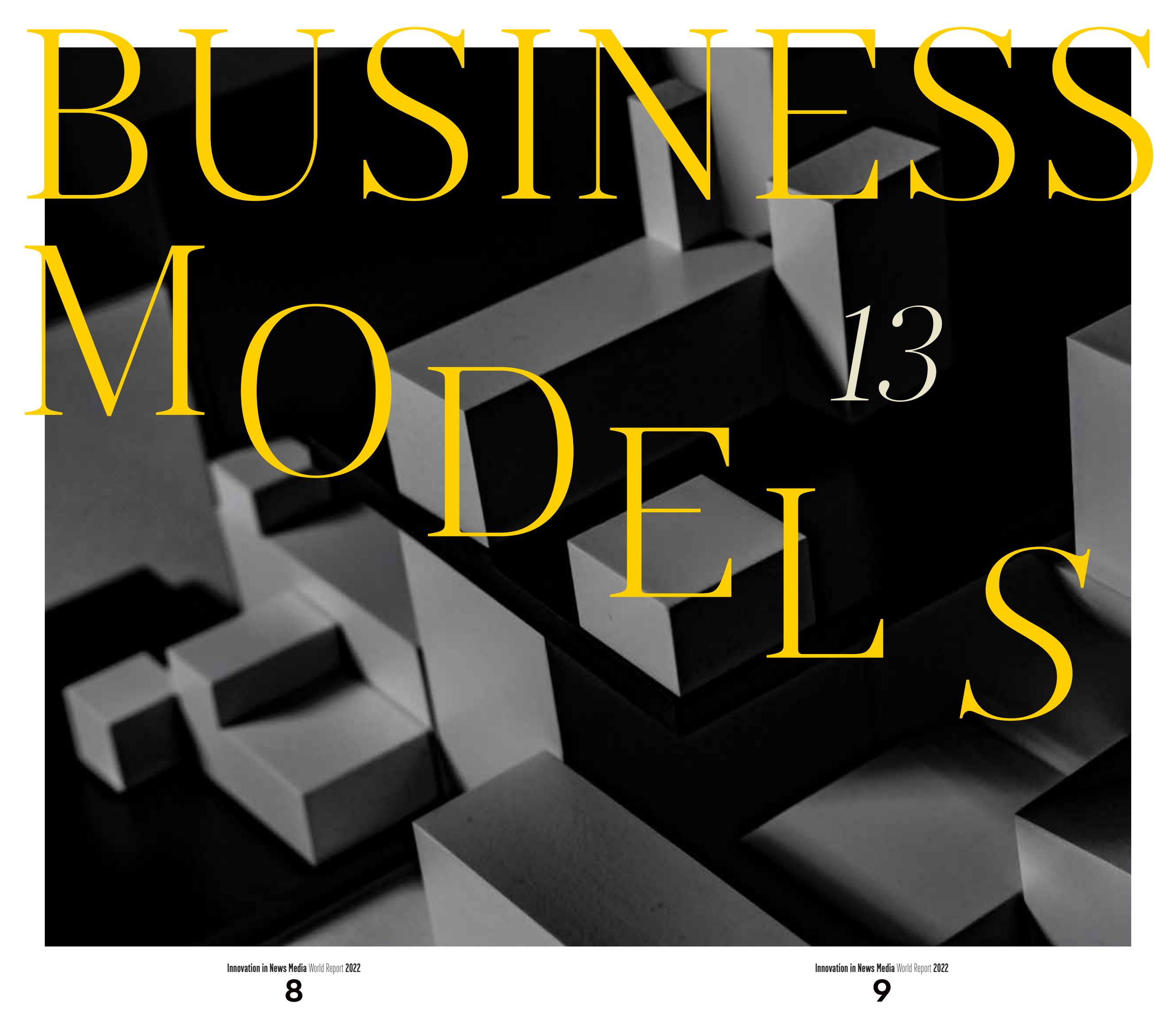


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BUSINESS MODELS

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Business Models

Business Models

	CLIENT FOCUS	INCOME POTENTIAL	TRANSACTION COSTS	PROFIT POTENTIAL	REQUIREMENTS	RISKS
PAID CONTENT	B2C				Unique, relevant content. Strong systems for raising awareness of that content.	Customers not willing to pay; High churn rate.
CREATIVE ADVERTISER	B2B				Native/branded content expertise; very strong creative teams possibly leveraging skills across newsroom, strong sales teams.	Competition from native/branded advertising agencies; high investment strategy.
DATA MINER	B2B				Sophisticated data-gathering software and internal analytics competencies to identify potential clients and deliver bespoke data	Weak databases, insufficient analytics capabilities, inability to show results.
PHILANTROPY	B2C				Clearly defined issues that appeal to donors; a strong funding culture and strong connections to the investor community and wealthy individuals.	Unless you have strong links to foundation funding it's difficult to break into that world; also concerns around losing editorial independence.
CLUB	B2C				Strong relationship of trust with your audience and regular communication with them. Partnerships for product and services portfolio.	Insufficient offerings and lack of engagement, which could mean that it would not look very different than a regular subscription.
IT PROVIDER	B2B				An IT team that has already created (or is capable of creating) unique media software and working comfortably with clients.	Substantial investments to hire expensive IT talent, and creating and maintaining the software.
EDUCATOR	B2C				Internal expertise or access to external expertise. A reputation for expertise in your niche(s). Potential partnerships with other online education providers.	Poor execution; lack of expertise. Poor reputation. Courses that miss the target audience's interests.
EVENT ORGANISER	B2C				Expertise in programming and logistics. Ability to bring interesting and relevant content to the stage.	Strong existing competition in your niche. Poor event organising capability. Unappealing content or presenters.
ARCHIVIST	B2C				An easily accessed database of old photos, stories, pages/covers easily reproduced. Lately, an ability to understand the blockchain ecosystem and leverage the same.	Cost of handling exceeds profits due to inefficiencies, insufficient demand.
BRAND LICENSOR	B2B				Strong, well-known and valued brand. Ability to think creatively about partnerships.	Core brand deterioration due to poor licensing choices.
AGENCY	B2B				Creative teams within the organisation. Marketing intelligence competencies.	Increasing competition from both traditional and upstart advertising and marketing agencies.
AFFILIATE MARKETER	B2C				Strong product reviews sections with top quality writing. Building reputation for impartiality over a period of time.	Audiences may not trust impartiality of reviews if they know publisher will get a cut from purchase.
RETAILER	B2C				Deep understanding of audiences. Accessible platform. Unique portfolio of products.	Poor logistics and customer service.

The Publisher as a Paid Content Provider

THE COVID-19 pandemic has taken many developing worldwide trends and accelerated them. Nowhere does this hold more true than in the pivot to a subscription-based economy. In times of strife and difficulty, people around the world turned to trusted sources for news and publishers in turn, worked to turn these new audiences into subscribers. The digital business and subscription management platform Piano tracked changes in the subscriber base of 123 publishers worldwide and found that at the end of 2020 publishers ended up with a whopping 58% more subscribers than they had a year previously. Around a fifth (21%) of American adults now pay for at least one online news outlet in the U.S., according to the Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2021. The majority of those paying have an average of two subscriptions.

This is a culmination of years of hard work into moving toward a subscriber-based model and there is now unbridled optimism that this will power the financial future of news. The Journalism, Media and

Technology Trends Predictions for 2021, authored by Nic Newman for the Reuters Institute finds that three-quarters (76%) of a sample of editors, CEOs, and digital leaders say Covid-19 has accelerated their plans for digital transition. Business plans include a faster switch to reader-focused business models. Driving digital subscriptions was rated an important or very important revenue focus for 76% of those sampled, ahead of both display and native advertising. Notably, Newman finds, the reverse was true when the question was last asked in 2018.

This reorientation of the economy around subscriptions is not restricted to news and media, according to The Future Today Institute's Tech Trends Report of 2021. 2020 was a hard year in many ways but it was a great year to be in the subscription business. In the UK alone, a survey by Barclay Card found that spending on digital and subscription services increased consistently throughout each month in 2020, jumping by 39.4% year-on-year in July. News remains a small part of this larger pie of

subscription services but it is definitely a beneficiary of the trend. A YouGov survey carried out in May this year found that 10% of the UK population is now willing to pay for news online, up from the 7% reported among Britons in the Reuters Institute Digital News Report of 2020.

Who is it for?

Everyone. The primary impetus remains to ensure that you have journalism worth paying for. Then you have to look for ways to build deeper connections with your audience so that they are more willing to open their wallets, and continue paying.

Focusing on reader revenue isn't just about bringing in more money; it also enables a publisher to create a higher-quality, better-performing product. The implicit promise of a subscription site after all, is that you are getting something worth paying for, something you can't get anywhere else.

Challenges

The Covid-19 pandemic, and other big news events like the U.S. election of 2020



For all businesses operating on a subscription-based model, pivoting from subscriber acquisition to subscriber retention is crucial.

brought in hundreds of thousands of new subscribers for news organisations. The big challenge now is getting them to stay.

For all businesses operating on a subscription-based model, pivoting from subscriber acquisition to subscriber retention is crucial, writes John Phillips, General Manager of Zuora, the subscription management platform, in What's New in Publishing. He highlights the problem of zombie subscribers – who rarely visit the website or read the content – who could very easily turn into non-subscribers. A recent survey by the Northwestern University's Medill Spiegel Research Center in the U.S. flagged this problem. The study found that nearly half of local news outlets' digital subscribers visit the sites they pay for less than once a month.

There will also be a softening of demand for news subscriptions as the big stories of 2020 peter out. Maximising the effects of this wave therefore, becomes critical. Collecting data on subscribers' interests and behaviours, identifying those at risk of cancellation and improving customer service are all useful and essential tools to deploy. ●

The Publisher as a Creative Advertiser

THE EARLY PART of 2020 saw ad markets collapse following the Covid-19 pandemic, but there were signs by the end of the year of an impressive bounce back. Ad spending is expected to grow by \$78 billion in 2021 to \$657 billion, a new all-time high, according to a new mid-year forecast from advertising firm Magna. In the "post-pandemic roaring twenties boom", as Ben Smith of the the New York Times reports, companies have begun pouring money into advertising on virtually every platform, but digital media most of all. Several publishers told Smith that their first-quarter ad revenue was significantly up over the same quarter last year: Insider by more than 30%; Bloomberg Media by 29%; Vice by 25%; and Axios' quarterly ad revenue nearly doubled.

This bounce back in advertising presents a significant opportunity for publishers. While the tilt toward a reader-centric business model is well and truly underway, ad dollars are going to be a big part of the news industry's recovery. And so even as we work our way through larger systemic shifts, such as the disappearance

of third party cookies in 2023, this is a time to make big bets in connecting with advertisers; through scale and creativity.

On the creative side, what can publishers do to wrest a share of the digital advertising pie away from Big Tech? The answer lies in leveraging their power of storytelling and creating campaigns that are agile and appealing. A report from INMA on "Why Branded Content Fits This Advertising Moment" details some important examples.

Examples

Grupo RBS, Brazil

Grupo RBS in Brazil needed an innovative approach to introduce their new client, Warren, a digital investment firm that challenged what people traditionally think of investing. To showcase the difference in Warren's approach, Grupo RBS created an exclusive video series, Prometendo Mundos e Fundos (Promising Worlds and Investment Funds) which was shared through Grupo RBS' main online channel, GaúchaZH, and was also available on two

radio stations – Atlântida and Gaúcha. Popular Brazilian journalist Luciano Potter was brought in as anchor to explain complicated matters such as investing in a more relaxed way, targeting a younger audience, and the videos used Warren's content presented in a fresh format to explain the products and services offered by the company. Listeners were encouraged to change the way they use their money: investing instead of saving.

Ringier Axel Springer Poland - Volvo

The Volvo name is synonymous with quality and safety and it has been an effective marketing approach for the automobile manufacturer. However, the average age of a Volvo customer is 47 and the company wanted to create a campaign that built premium brand awareness with younger clients between the ages of 25 and 44. To do that, it turned to Poland's Ringier Axel Springer.

The collaboration led to the creation One on One Tour, which told intriguing, real-world travel stories through the eyes of the young people living those stories. The idea was to showcase Volvo as a comfortable yet rugged option for adventurers, dispelling its image as an older person's vehicle. To narrate the series, they turned to Jaroslaw Kuzniar, one of the most well-known journalists and influencers in Poland, who led viewers on a journey to six countries around the world – all powered by Volvo.

South China Morning Post – Qantas Airways

Although Qantas Airways has served

Hong Kong for 70 years, it still has relatively low brand recognition and awareness in the market. As the national carrier for Australia, Qantas wanted to position itself as the first choice for air travel, particularly to Australia. The airline worked with South China Morning Post and Morning Studio to create a campaign celebrating the 70th anniversary of the first Qantas flight landing in Hong Kong.

Primarily centred on a video titled, "The Past, The Present, and The Future," the idea behind the campaign was to show the role Qantas had played for culture, trade, and travel between the two countries. It used archived materials from SCMP and the airline, along with original new interviews with pilots. To support the video, SCMP also ran three written articles on connected themes.

Who is it for?

You need to have the capability to produce native advertising content and think across formats like video, audio, interactive graphics etc. You also need a marketing team that can sell the company's creative value proposition to clients and compete with other ad agencies.

Challenges

There will be a lot of competition in this space from both traditional and upstart advertising agencies. Producing high quality campaigns also requires a high level of investment in in-house studios and sales operations. ●

The Publisher as a Data Miner

THE END OF third-party cookies has cast uncertainty over the digital advertising model. Google announced this year that it would be phasing them out on its Chrome browser in 2023, a one year extension on its original deadline, and following the trend set by rival browsers Firefox in 2019 and Safari in 2019. Chrome alone accounts for over 65% of the global desktop browser market share.

The demise of third-party cookies is a big win for online privacy but is a difficult proposition for the publishing industry. Because they track user history and serve up relevant ads, third party cookies form the backbone of digital advertising. A survey by INMA in April revealed that

85 percent of news executives said their online ad revenues depend on third-party cookies. Google's own study, published in 2019, found that the phase-out could lead to a 52% average drop in ad revenue for publishers; and a report by McKinsey estimates that the publishing industry will have to replace up to \$10 billion in ad revenue with a combination of methods to acquire first-party (data

directly from consumers who consent to sharing it). It's little wonder then, that publishers have taken to referring to the imminent demise of third-party data as the 'cookiepocalypse'. But the reality may be less daunting than it appears. Publishers have a direct relationship with their audiences and can collect this first-party data directly from their readers, listeners and viewers, putting them firmly in the driving seat as the digital advertising market realigns. This is invaluable information that can be used internally but also offered to advertisers. So even as the tech industry debates what kind of system might follow third-party cookies, we find that a number of publishers have been thinking proactively about how they might approach the collection of data for the future.

Examples:

The New York Times

In July 2020, The New York Times built its own proprietary first-party data

platform and began to offer clients 45 new proprietary first-party audience segments to target ads.

Those segments are broken up into 6 categories: age (age ranges, generation), income (HHI, investable assets, etc.), business (level, industry, retirement, etc.), demo (gender, education, marital status, etc.) and interest (fashion, etc.)

"This can only work because we have six million subscribers and millions more registered users that we can identify and because we have a breadth of content," says Allison Murphy, Senior Vice President of Ad Innovation.

As of February 2021, adexchanger.com reported that digital ads that use The New York Times' first-party data accounted for more than 20% of the Times' core ad revenue in Q4 of 2020. The year before, revenue from ads with first-party data totaled just 7%.

News UK

British publisher News UK, part of the Murdoch-owned News Corp, launched Nucleus, a first-party data platform giving

advertisers access to, it says 36.5m online users across the Times, Times Radio, Sun, Virgin Radio and Talksport brands, Press Gazette reported in July 2021.

Nucleus combines rich first-party demographic data with unique declared and contextual targeting information so advertisers can benefit from both traditional user metrics and newer insight such as opinions, preference, and emotions. "First-party data gives brands greater targeting accuracy, ensures that they remain privacy compliant and future proofs their activities in a rapidly changing market," News UK's Commercial director Ben Walmsley told Press Gazette.

JP/Politikens Hus (Denmark)

The Danish publisher JP/Politikens Hus had been tracking changes to third-party data policies across web browsers as well as across mobile operating systems like Apple iOS for several years. It took proactive action back in 2019, after dialogue with advertisers and media agencies, to launch a new data platform, called Relevance.

This platform delivers relevant target groups based on first-party data and context data to media agencies and advertisers across the Danish national news media sites Ekstra Bladet, Jyllands-Posten and Politiken, which are owned by the publisher.

“Drive” - collective of German regional publishers

A collective effort by German regional publishers, the “Drive” initiative could provide a useful map for the road that lies ahead for the news industry. In 2020, the German news agency Deutsche Presse-Agentur and the publishing consultancy Schickler created a cooperation between publishers with a simple idea: share resources, share data and share insights. The reasoning was that for smaller publishers, collection of data can be

costly and tedious. Each publisher has to recruit its own data science teams, build the data infrastructure and go through all the experiments only to realize that she lacks the critical amount of data. The data experts from Schickler set up a joint data warehouse which collects in real time first-party customer data from all the news sites.

The pilot phase of the project included three regional publishers: Mittelbayerische Zeitung (Regensburg), Badische Zeitung (Freiburg) and Aachener Zeitung (Aachen) and in the second half of 2020, five new publishers joined up: Lensing Media (Dortmund), Aschendorff (Münster), Südwest Presse (Ulm), Zeitungsgruppe Ostfriesland (Emden), and Rheinpfalz (Ludwigshafen). Up to 15 publishers are expected to be part of the initiative by end 2021.



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Other examples - Bloomberg, Forbes (USA), Bauer Media (UK)

Who is it for?

Any publisher who collects data on their readers can create first party data. Building out a sophisticated system of audience segments to advertisers hover, would require a large enough reader base as well some sophisticated data science. One way around that is forming publisher collectives, as the “Drive” initiative demonstrates.

Challenges

Small publishers will feel that they cannot compete in this world. Half of small publishers plan to rely more on non-advertising sources of revenue when

third-party cookies are phased out at the end of 2021, according to a survey Digiday conducted in the first quarter of 2021.

“Without third-party cookies and targeting, they don’t have the scale to compete,” said Fran Wills, the CEO of the Local Media Consortium, a trade group that negotiates preferred rates with vendors and platforms for over 5,000 local news publisher sites, told Digiday. “They aren’t necessarily engineers or digital experts, nor do they have the time or the resources to keep up.” ●

The Publisher as a Recipient of Philanthropy

AS THE ADVERTISING market grows more challenging, many newsrooms have chosen the nonprofit route. They are funding their journalism through individual contributions and direct support from foundations and other charitable organizations. Support from these sources has continued to pour in despite concerns in 2020 that funds may be diverted to resources to support Covid-19 recovery work.

Press Gazette reported data from Media Impact Funders and Candid, an organisation that tracks spending in the charitable sector, showing global philanthropic donations for journalism increased almost six times, going from \$75m to \$419m between 2009 and 2018. And although data collection for 2019 and 2020 is incomplete, early figures show 2020 is set to be a record-breaking year.

Separately, the Institute for Nonprofit

News (INN) reported that nearly two-thirds of news nonprofits saw increases in individual giving in 2020, and for about half of those outlets the bump was more than 50%. “Nonprofit news outlets attracted more first-time contributors than ever before,” the organisation’s annual report notes.

Operating a nonprofit is generally an option for highly niche, mission-driven publications. Data from the INN estimates that about 21% of nonprofit news outlets focus on in-depth coverage of a single topic. But with funding growing this model is also being used by general interest news companies to fund specific types of coverage.

Examples

The Guardian (UK)

The Guardian – through its U.S.-based philanthropic arm theguardian.org –

raised \$9 million between April 2020 and April 2021. It continues to pioneer a revenue approach combining subscribers with donors.

“For a place like The Guardian, we wouldn’t and shouldn’t be seeking the same kind of funding that nonprofit newsrooms split because we have lots of different revenue streams that support the news organization,” Rachel White, who leads the Guardian’s philanthropic efforts, told Nieman Lab. “We really needed to define why and how we would seek philanthropic support.”

Donor-supported articles are “editorially independent” but supported by a particular donor. So The Guardian and the donor agree the funding will be used to provide extra resources to fund journalism about a particular subject area. “Every one of the ideas that we take to philanthropy comes first from senior

editors at The Guardian. They tell us what they’re interested in and then we see if there’s an opportunity for us to find support for it,” White says.

The New York Times Headway Initiative (USA)

The New York Times raised \$4 million to launch Headway, a journalism initiative to investigate global and national challenges in December 2020. The project will create a team of journalists to cover a range of economic, social, health, infrastructural and environmental challenges, looking beyond the daily news cycle. It aims to produce 10-12 deeply researched, visually ambitious, data-rich projects a year.

As part of Headway, The Times said it will also pioneer an online public square focused on community-building, transparency, engagement and data dissemination. The goal is to support and



For general news outlets it makes sense to combine philanthropic funding for special projects with other forms of revenue.

encourage debate, education and research around the topics Headway addresses. Headway's coverage will also be freely accessible without a subscription.

The Salt Lake Tribune (USA)

A trailblazer in this category, The Tribune was the first legacy newspaper in the U.S. to transform from a for-profit company to a nonprofit business in 2019. The paper still seeks subscribers and advertisers but its status as a nonprofit allows supporters to make tax deductible donations.

The Tribune also created the Utah Journalism Foundation to support the newspaper, small journalism start-ups around the state, and create scholarships for journalism students, CEO Paul Huntsman told Editor & Publisher.

Tribune editor Jennifer Napier-Pearce said she hopes this encourages other

publishers to adapt the model as local news outlets continue to struggle. "Some nonprofit publishers may want to put up a digital paywall, others may want to retain traditional advertising...still others—like us—want to do all of the above," she said.

The Marshall Project (USA)

The Marshall Project, which focuses on criminal justice news, wasn't the first digital nonprofit news outlet when it launched seven years ago. But Nieman Lab writes that it was part of an important wave of single-subject, national nonprofit news sites – a wave that also included education news nonprofit Chalkbeat (launched in 2013) and gun violence news nonprofit The Trace (launched in 2015).

Despite a raft of editorial successes, including a Pulitzer Prize in 2016 for a story

that became the acclaimed Netflix series Unbelievable, funding hasn't been easy and The Marshall Project is turning to its readers for support. Its running cost is still largely covered by grants and large gifts from individuals and family foundations.

Who is it for?

The Knight Foundation said that 2020 was the year of Nonprofit Local News in America. As donations and the number of outlets operating on this model have grown, they have been supported by a programme called NewsMatch, which doubles and sometimes triples each donation to a nonprofit newsroom from November 1 to December 31 each year. That funding comes from a growing list of foundations.

Operating a nonprofit generally makes more sense when there is a niche

area of coverage and where specific donor organisations working in the area can be identified. For general news outlets it makes sense to combine philanthropic funding for special projects with other forms of revenue.

Challenges

Though it is catching up in other parts of the world, philanthropic funding for news is a far bigger trend in the U.S. In 2018 for instance, more than 80% of the funding recorded by Candid went to projects in the US. All of the 15 leading funders since 2009 have also been US organisations. For publishers elsewhere, remaining reliant on a small number of big donors means you run the risk of losing your independence. There is also the risk that funding isn't necessarily consistent or long-term. ●

The Publisher as a Club

MEMBERSHIPS offer publishers the chance to strengthen ties of loyalty with their readers while building a revenue stream. Unlike subscriptions, the membership model is not purely transactional and invites readers to support organisations they believe in either financially or otherwise. The Membership Guide, released by the Membership Puzzle Project in 2020, after three years of study and support for membership models globally, describes it as a social contract between a news organization and its members. Members give their time, money, energy, expertise, and connections to support a cause that they believe in. In exchange, the news organization offers transparency and opportunities to meaningfully contribute to the sustainability and impact of the organization. Often, membership is an agreement to keep access to journalism free for all.

Examples

El Diario (Spain)

Before the pandemic, membership accounted for one-third of the

publication's revenue, with most revenue coming from advertising. Paying readers receive perks that include invitations to special events, the ability to comment on articles and an ad-free online experience. They also get access to stories a few hours before other readers and receive a quarterly monograph magazine delivered directly to their homes. Eldiario.es' membership model, launched in 2012 was one of the first in Europe and inspired The Guardian's membership programme launched in 2014.

When Covid-19 hit advertising revenues, the only option for the organisation was to raise membership fees, the first time it had done so since 2012. In March 2020 the publication announced that the annual fees would rise from €60 to €80 and monthly membership would go up by one euro to €8. Readers were also asked to pay €100 instead of €80 if they could. An incredible 97% of eldiario.es's members accepted the new prices and 18,056 new members joined in just two months. A further option to donate money to the newsroom generated an additional €80,000 in revenue. A fine example of how to capitalise on the relationship cultivated

with readers over years, eldiario.es is now making more revenue from members than advertising.

Ukrayinska Pravda (Ukraine)

A key ethic of Ukrayinska Pravda, an independent digital outlet, is that content must be freely available for wider audiences. When Covid-19 hit advertising revenues, the outlet came up with a three-level membership model inspired by approaches adopted by other industries like the Star Alliance programme.

Club UP is for readers who are interested in providing basic support to Ukrayinska Pravda and want to be involved in the editorial process. Its value proposition includes an exclusive newsletter, access to closed events, opportunities for direct discussion with the editorial team and the ability to vote for specific content or propose reporting topics.

Toloka UP level (Toloka means communal work in Ukrainian) is for readers who want to support UP and receive something tangible in return for their contribution. The main membership benefit at this level is a set of discounts and bonuses from UP partner companies including shops, cafes, restaurants, hotels and booksellers.

Editor's Club, the final level, focuses on wealthier audiences. It is made up of members either invited directly by the editor-in-chief or recommended by one of the existing members. Editor's Club members join a private chat for discussions and attend offline events (COVID-19 restrictions permitting), with discussions on important social and political issues and guest speakers.

Newstapa (South Korea)

The South Korean nonprofit investigative newsroom Newstapa was formed in 2012

by journalists who protested against attempts by the previous administrations to control broadcasters and mainstream media. Newstapa runs a donation-based membership model with over 40,000 members and is a great example of how to push the needle with engagement. The Membership Puzzle Project, which tracks their work, notes that Newstapa regularly opens its offices in Seoul for events aimed at members and the wider public. Journalists present behind-the-scenes work for stories being published that day to attendees, answer questions, and initiate discussions about how to elaborate on their reporting. Individuals and representatives of various organisations interested in the proposed topics usually participate. They can sometimes become sources for stories or experts sharing knowledge.

Who is it for

You need to have a brand that your audience believes in and trusts. Of course, it is important to generate a robust list of 'added value' benefits so that subscribers have preferential access to relevant events, premieres and/or discounts across a range of services. It also requires a proactive marketing strategy to ensure that club members are not only satisfied, but willing to renew their memberships.

Challenges

Building a successful membership model takes time as it involves nurturing a workflow in which the audience are treated as equal partners. Figuring out a feasible engagement strategy with readers for your organisation can take a lot of trial and error and possibly a lot of surveys. ●

The Publisher as an IT Provider

WHEN THEY DEVELOP particularly successful in-house tools, media companies can consider IT licensing services to their peers in the industry. This is a particularly good way of increasing the brand's prestige as an innovator looking to find solutions to the industry's challenges.

Examples

The Globe and Mail, Canada - Sophi

After almost eight years in development, Canada's The Globe and Mail launched Sophi, its homegrown artificial intelligence startup in 2020. The publication places nearly 100% of content across its digital properties using the software which has been trained to understand what belongs where on the website and updates pages with stories

that warrant increased promotion. Sophi also runs a real-time, personalized paywall that considers the content a reader has consumed and understands when to ask a reader for money versus an email address – and for that matter, when to leave them alone and ask for nothing.

Globe and Mail's chief executive, Phillip Crawley, told Press Gazette that Sophi drives much of the news publisher's recent subscriber success – the paper now generates 70% of its revenues from subscriptions. Sophi has put itself in position to be adopted by several publishers. More than 50 titles spread across 11 different publishers will launch Sophi on their sites this year, Sophi VP Gordon Edall told Digiday

Washington Post - Zeus Performance

The Post has built a reputation as a major tech innovator over the last few years. Its

content management system (CMS), Arc Publishing, is used by more than 1,400 websites in the journalism industry and beyond.

On the advertising side of the business, it has Zeus Technology, a "media monetisation platform" created by the Post's research, experimentation and development team. For publishers The Post offers Zeus Performance, a product that improves website speed and the "viewability" and performance of adverts on a site. Publishers who use Zeus Performance see their average advert viewability surpass 70%, with some reaching up to 90%, Jarrod Dicker, The Post's vice-president for commercial technology told Press Gazette.

Last year, the company rolled out a new product called Zeus Insights, an advertising system which allows publishing partners to utilise first-party reader data to sell highly-targeted adverts. Currently being offered to sites that use the Zeus Performance system, programmes like these will become crucial as third-party cookies are phased out by the end of the year.

La Voz del Interior, Argentina - Wyleex

When the Argentinian news outlet La Voz del Interior wanted to launch a subscription model two years ago, they started to assess vendors for a paywall platform. When they couldn't find a solution to meet their financial need, they created a subscription model with their own paywall solution. It is the first regional media outlet in Argentina to try a paywall.

"Wyleex was born from this unexpected situation, and our IT team

was willing to develop the technology by collecting all the expertise we had gathered," Mauricio Rucci, Wyleex CEO, told Editor and Publisher. Wyleex's model combines the metered paywall with the offer of premium content, available only to subscribers. When La Voz launched its paywall system in February 2018, it aimed to reach 5,000 digital subscriptions in the first year. The target was accomplished in just three months. Today, the number is over 25,000.

Rucci said they have five large media companies in Latin America as clients, and more than 50 prospects in 19 countries. They are also working on some proposals in Europe and the United States.

Who is it for?

Making a success of this model requires a lot of investment in technology. It's no coincidence that the Jeff Bezos-owned Washington Post has emerged as a flag bearer for this revenue stream. It also requires developing a business-oriented consultative selling and consulting culture within the IT team to provide these services to internal and external customers.

Challenges

Sophisticated technology comes at a cost that many publishers may not be able to afford. As the Wall Street Journal reported, "Lining up customers who are willing to pay six- and seven-figure sums for publishing technology may be a tall order in a digital media industry where many players are struggling to meet their financial targets." ●

The Publisher as an Educator

PUBLISHERS ARE BUILDING on their reputation of expertise to offer various classes and courses to their audiences. Interest in online courses offered by MasterClass and Coursera surged during the pandemic, making this a smart use of journalistic experience and a trend that publishers can exploit. Tie-ups with universities and other digital education companies are also being explored as viable options for publishers.

Examples

The Economist

The Economist launched its new online executive education program, Economist Education, in May this year. The first course, “The New Global Order: How politics, business and technology are

changing,” lasts for six weeks and will require a commitment of six to eight hours per week. The cost is £1,475 (\$2,087).

The program is created by Economist journalists and features experts from a variety of disciplines, including Kevin Rudd, former Prime Minister of Australia, and Eric Schmidt, former CEO of Google. The Economist is collaborating with the digital education company GetSmarterto to develop these courses. The second course will be on business writing.

Womens’ Wear Daily

The fashion industry trade journal Women’s Wear Daily has teamed up with the Parsons School of Design and the education platform Yellowbrick to produce Fashion Business Essentials – an online course on the trends shaping the

industry today.

The program includes over 15 hours of instruction and project time offered across five modules hitting topics as diverse as “Entrepreneurship and the Fashion System,” “Managing Fashion Production,” “Fashion Branding,” “Marketing Strategies,” and “Retailing and Distribution.”

Those who complete the course will earn a non-credit certificate from Parsons.

Rolling Stone

Last year Rolling Stone worked with Yellowbrick, IndieWire and New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts to launch a course around film and TV. Rolling Stone is now working with Yellowbrick on another course focused on writing. Before working together, Rolling Stone was “figuring out” how to engage with students who wanted to learn about the film and TV industry. “The more a business like ours can offer compelling ways to engage online with our content and our brands – we are always looking to pursue that,” Gus Wenner, president and COO of Rolling Stone told Digiday

The New York Times – The Learning Network

Launched in 1998, the newspaper publisher’s Learning Network provides roughly 1,000 new resources, including curriculum materials, activities, lesson plans and writing prompts, for free each year to middle and high school students and teachers.

During the pandemic, the Learning Network added around 20 webinars on topics like writing, math and social studies, two live events where students could ask Times journalists questions and a one-year professional development

program for teachers. Now the team is working on a full-year curriculum focused on journalism and news literacy for students that will likely be available within the next year, following the success of a previous curriculum the team produced on writing lessons two years ago, Michael Gonchar, editor of The Learning Network, told Digiday.

The Wall Street Journal

In August 2020, the publisher launched its first free, course-style newsletter, the Six-Week Money Challenge, to help people with their finances, followed by a six-week Fitness Challenge last winter with exercises to do at home. Given the success of those campaigns with click rates and bringing in news audiences, the publisher decided to launch another newsletter-based education program in June this year. The five-part course on stock investing is written by the columnists of Heard on the Street, The Wall Street Journal’s financial and economic analysis column.

Who is it for?

As the examples illustrate, there is potential for a great range of online courses to be offered. You need a strong brand, ideally with some intellectual flair, and offerings that fit with your values and content. Educational programmes could involve some participation and input from your journalists to increase connect and build relationships with your audience.

Challenges

It is important to find an area where you stand out, whether that is because of expertise in a specific area, or loyalty from a particular market or demographic. ●

The Publisher as an Event Organiser

MORE NEWS publishers have started to organise events as an additional revenue stream over the last few years, taking advantage of their journalists' expertise and their brand's convening power to host topical discussions. This model could represent 20% of total revenues when done right with good brand partnerships and the right management team. When Covid struck, this was the revenue model that seemed to be most obviously at risk. However, throughout 2020, and most of 2021, we have seen large publishers successfully adapt and make the switch to virtual events, some with stunning financial results. Virtual events don't look to be going anywhere soon and have allowed publishers the opportunity to scale up participation, even as they make plans for a future in which a hybrid model of virtual and in-person could become the new norm.

Examples

Financial Times

Like many other publishers The Financial Times had to rethink their live events business as the world went into lockdown. The first event they organised virtually was a small webinar called the Global Economic Emergency. The one-

hour session drew in 8,000 registrations. "That was a real lightbulb moment that maybe there was something in the digital space," says Orson Francescone, director of FT Live, the publication's events business, told journalism.co.uk in August 2021.

In just four weeks, the publisher put on its three-day event Global Boardroom, featuring 120 speakers from former prime ministers to governors of banks. The Boardroom had 25k registrations by the end of day one; 50k by the end of day three. Fast forward to September 2020 and FT Live had put on 200 digital events with a combined reach of 250k delegates. That is an incredible tenfold increase from the 25k that physical events used to fetch annually.

Bloomberg

In August 2021, Axios reported the startling statistic, circulated in a Bloomberg internal memo, that the company's pivot from live to virtual to hybrid events has led to a 500% revenue increase year-over-year.

TIME

Time created "Time100 Talks," a virtual series spun out of its flagship "Time100" franchise that brings together leaders in different fields to discuss solutions to global problems. The 'Talks' "didn't exist

in March of 2020, but now is a tentpole [that] I don't see leaving our brand anytime soon," Ian Orefice, head of Time Studios, told Digiday.

"TIME100 Talks" was to be a one-off virtual event but an overwhelmingly positive response led the company to evolve it into a weekly event series. The series has attracted over 200 high profile guests and generated more than 80 million video views across Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and TIME.com.

Conde Nast

Conde Nast is banking on virtual events continuing well into the future. In 2020, the publisher hosted more than 400 virtual or hybrid events, which reached a cumulative 700,000 attendees, Eric Johnson, the senior vice president of global commercial marketing and events, told Adweek. In 2021, Condé Nast plans to organize a mix of more than 500 online, hybrid, or in-person events, though the majority will feature a mixed model. "Hybrid is here to stay," Johnson said.

Condé Nast is also introducing two new products: a dedicated website for virtual events, and its new measurement tool for tracking virtual-event advertising efficacy called Encore. The scale that a remote event can achieve allows publishers to sell advertising against them, opening up a revenue stream that was previously nonexistent. Over 23,000 virtual guests attended the 2020 New Yorker Festival, and 2,600 tuned in to Vogue's virtual Forces of Fashion event last summer, according to Johnson.

The Wall Street Journal

A year of planning virtual events got The Wall Street Journal's live events team ready to test an innovative virtual format for the company's flagship Future of Everything Festival held in May this year. With over 50,000 registered subscribers logging in over three days the live events team looked to create a networking

experience – something many publishers have struggled to do successfully in the virtual space. Their "Tinder for business" model had attendees identify the topic areas they're interested in or work in, to be matched with like-minded attendees. The WSJ charged for access to the festival with a range of price points, from a \$195 half-day pass to \$695 for access to the full three days, making it much cheaper than the in-person event used to be.

Who is it for?

Online events are cheaper to organise, so it could be a good time to test interest and your journalists' capacity as moderators or hosts. It increasingly looks like a hybrid model for events is here to stay and may provide publishers a business model that offers the best of both worlds.

Challenges

For all the talk of lower overheads and limitless audience size, the truth is very few companies have been able to make the same amount of money from virtual events, Lucinda Southern, media editor at Adweek, wrote in May 2021. Previously some publishers generated up to a third of their revenue from events, and matching that through virtual events has been a challenge. Only four in 10 event teams have profitably pivoted from in-person to virtual.

Among the many factors to consider is pricing and this is an area where no hard and fast solutions are visible. Over the last year, the price companies charge for virtual events has wildly varied, according to Ben Hindman, CEO at event marketing firm Splash. In the third quarter of 2020, the average ticket price was \$100. At its lowest, this average dropped to under \$40 in the first quarter of 2021. The tension is also in trying to work out how many people will pay to attend virtual consumer-facing events once they are free to attend in person. ●

The Publisher as an Archivist

LONGSTANDING NEWS publishers are likely to have huge archives which are invaluable records of modern history. In addition to their value to journalists, how can these be used to generate additional income or subscriber benefits?

There is the traditional way of making the archives a viable revenue source. The French Weekly Magazine, Paris Match, for instance, built up a catalogue of at least 15 million digital images. It monetised this archive by reselling to foreign publishers, signing a deal with Getty Images in 2012 and renting images to exhibitions in public or private spaces.

The power of the news image still holds enormous potential as a monetizable asset. To this, in 2021, we add a more recent craze or phenomenon: the Non Fungible Token or NFT. NFTs are digital assets that represent real-world objects like art and music. They are bought and sold online, frequently with cryptocurrency, and they are generally encoded with the same underlying software as many cryptos. Sounds too gimmicky for you yet?

Although they've been around since 2014, NFTs are gaining notoriety now because they are becoming an increasingly popular way to buy and sell digital artwork. And some publishers are

jumping on to the gold rush. Could it be the next great source of revenue or the next bubble to burst?

Examples

TIME - "Is God Dead?" cover auction

Time jumped on to the NFT craze in March this year with auctions for three magazine covers. The first was its iconic 1966 cover asking, "Is God Dead?" The second was a more recent spin on that cover from 2017, during the Trump years, when the magazine asked: "Is Truth Dead?" A brand-new "cover" that's not actually appearing in the magazine: "Is Fiat Dead?" was designed for the NFT sale and is basically meant to appeal to crypto-enthusiasts.

"Fiat money is government-issued currency that is not backed by a physical commodity, such as gold or silver, but rather by the government that issued it. Crypto currencies, like Bitcoin and Dogecoin, are challenging that model," a release from Time said.

The three covers were auctioned on digital artworks marketplace SuperRare for \$435,000. Time President Keith Grossman told Adweek this is an

extension of Time's existing cover story business, which is a seven-figure business line. "This is not just about the collectibles and big drops," Grossman said. "The more interesting part is what does this mean about the future of subscriptions, the future of community, the future of membership."

CNN - Vault by CNN

CNN announced in June that it would sell "moments" from its television archives as non-fungible tokens.

For 41 years, CNN has gone to extraordinary lengths to document and broadcast the global stories of our time. Now, the network and digital news powerhouse is opening its archives for the first time to offer collectors the opportunity to own a piece of history.

Vault by CNN will house a select set of digital collectibles, or 'Moments', from CNN's television archives, mint them as NFTs using blockchain technology, and sell them at vault.cnn.com.

"Until now, there has been no way to 'collect' these moments. Users can often find old footage online, or packaged up in documentaries, but they cannot 'own' them or display them in the way they can with a print newspaper or magazine," CNN said in an FAQ about the service.

South China Morning Post - ARTIFACT

In August 2021, journalism.co.uk reported that The South China Morning Post wanted to turn its historic articles, pictures and other items into digital assets that cannot be tampered with and can also be owned by anyone.

The project launched by the publication is called ARTIFACT and it will see items like important historic images or front pages re-created digitally using blockchain technology. These NFTs can then be collected or traded by the members of the public or institutions.

Harvard Business Review - Harvard Business School case studies

The NFT craze aside, pictures are not the only archive content which have value. The Harvard Business Review uses case studies from the Harvard Business School to add value to premium subscriptions. These case studies, going back several years, bring real-world business dilemmas to life for students, entrepreneurs, and professionals around the world, often dissecting real-life situations where managers have to make key decisions.

Harvard's case studies often make their way into college lesson plans. Educators can access course packets to use in their teaching. "It's an entire collection of solutions to almost any type of business problem," Nini Diana, HBR's director of consumer marketing, told DigitalContentNext. Harvard's 640 ebooks and thousands of case studies provide such a valuable selling point that one in five subscribers opts to pay 50% more to access them. "Our archive is gold," Diana said. "A superuser of our content can benefit from any of them."

Who is it for?

This model can only work for publishers with a long history and the capacity to digitise archives. And increasingly, for news organisations that have the resources to take big bets on emerging technologies like NFTs.

Challenges

It is no small job for a large publication to digitise archives. Organisations as big as The New York Times and Reuters received funding from Google for the digitisation of their archives. The NYT said each person in its archive team had to scan about 1,000 images per day to complete the project in 2019. But if it can be useful to reporters, and bring in some revenue, it could be worth considering. ●

The Publisher as a Brand Licensor

WHEN A PUBLISHER'S brand has high intangible value, it can be worth taking advantage of this to license the brand in other related products or services to bring in income. This could take the form of the publisher lending their name to events or even entering the retail space by creating its own line of consumer products. This direct-to-consumer approach is growing ever more important as media companies around the world move away from traditional forms of advertising.

Examples

Conde Nast - Vogue Cafe

2020 was a hard year for the restaurant business across the western world. In China however, as the pandemic was brought under control earlier and the economy rebounded to pre pandemic levels, the picture was very different. It encouraged Conde Nast to open the Vogue Cafe Beijing under license agreement with Beijing Sycamore Seed Advertising & Media Co, in November last

year. Spread over 400 square metres in the bustling China World Mall in central Beijing, the space channels all of the iconic brand's imagery.

"Translating the 2D digital print experience into a physical space is all about creating those touch points – those recognisable moments consumers associate with Vogue," Markus Grindel, Managing Director, Global Brand Licensing at Condé Nast, FIPP in January this year

The restaurant joins Condé Nast's portfolio of branded properties under its global licensing division. Other eateries include Vogue Cafés in Moscow, Porto and Riyadh, Vogue Lounge Kuala Lumpur, Vogue Restaurant Istanbul and GQ Bar Berlin.

The New Yorker – The New Yorker Store

The New Yorker store, launched in November 2020, aims to provide readers with "apparel, home goods, and more that celebrate the magazine, its history,

and its sense of humour", according to its newsletter.

Products on sale include a signature baseball cap, worn each summer by the staff's softball team, the Small Fry; a sustainably produced classic tee with the iconic logo, drawn by the magazine's first art editor, Rea Irvin; and limited-edition socks featuring a riff on Eustace Tilley, the magazine's original cover dandy, designed by the illustrator Luci Gutiérrez.

Real Simple, Meredith Group – Real Simple handbags

Real Simple, a Meredith magazine, recently announced the launch of Real Simple handbags in partnership with television shopping channel QVC, in a brand extension inspired by Real Simple's mission to simplify busy modern lives. "This line was created to help women across the country move effortlessly from the grocery store to the office to their best-friend's birthday party," said Liz Vaccarello, Editor-in-Chief, Real Simple.

This is just one example of Meredith's slew of licensing and branded content offerings of which it is a pioneer. Inspired by its Better Homes and Gardens gardens magazine, it has a product line that is at more than 3,800 Walmart stores in the U.S. The products range from seasonally driven products in all major home and gardening categories to linens, towels and home décor.

Atlas Obscura – Atlas Obscura Experiences

The online travel magazine Atlas

Obscura, which catalogues exotic and obscure travel destinations, has expanded to offer an array of online and in-person events through Atlas Obscura Experiences. Offerings include talks with travel writers, virtual museum tours, virtual nature tours, experiences like cooking classes, and even extended trips to exotic destinations.

The brand, which turned 10 years old in 2019, expanded its offerings by teaming up with Airbnb in 2019 to go more international. "We'll launch new tours, workshops, and events in new cities all over the world. We'll also continue to host them where we always have, but much more frequently, giving you more opportunities to join us on experiences," the company said.

Who is it for?

Brands who have a high recognition factor and credibility high enough to constitute a seal of quality can licence their brand name to develop new products and services. In many countries, media companies have sufficient brand awareness and cultural relevance to achieve this.

Challenges

Creating branded products can isolate a publisher's ad partners that operate in those areas, as Business Insider pointed out in a 2017 article. It is also crucial to choose your products and partners wisely: there is no guarantee of success. ●

The Publisher as an Agency

PRODUCING ADVERTISING content for brands is a way for news publishers to make extra revenue with their significant expertise in storytelling. Branded content is a strong strategy for today's COVID-influenced market and for consumers influenced by viral videos, on-demand entertainment, and unique experiences, notes a 2020 research paper from INMA. Further, it says that branded content can create trust and lucrative relationships between media publishers, advertisers, and audiences when it's done with an authentic voice, across multiple platforms, and backed by data.

Examples

The New York Times – T Brand

The winner for best content studio at the 2021 Digiday Media Awards, T Brand produced important content and programs for major clients such as Tide, Dropbox, Snap and Citi. "The studio's programs for Tide and Dropbox helped readers navigate changes in daily life

and business, while campaigns for Snap and Citi promoted racial literacy in classrooms and supported initiatives designed to close the racial wealth gap. Additionally, T Brand worked pro bono for the NYC Mayor's Office on messaging about the importance of masks and social distancing during the summer," Digiday noted. T Brand advised numerous clients on their response to the pandemic with a consultation entitled "The Business Acts, The Brand Speaks," designed to give clients confidence to reenter the market. It also found success in the podcast space, creating an original podcast with Invesco that ranks among Apple's top finance podcasts.

The Atlantic – Re:think

Re:think is a studio within The Atlantic that produces documentaries, public artworks, podcasts, and articles. The studio says it aims to take The Atlantic's journalistic sensibility and apply it to work for brands.

In 2020, Atlantic Re:think worked with Amazon Web Services to create

"Disrupt Within," a video series showcasing iconic companies undergoing significant transformation, highlighting how even legacy brands can be nimble, as long as they have the right combination of insight and technology, Digiday reported. Each video featured the leaders behind the companies reconsidering, redesigning and recharging their brand's services. These technology fueled transformations all relied on Amazon's cloud-based solutions. These technology-fuelled transformations all relied on Amazon's cloud-based solutions.

South China Morning Post

– Morning Studio

In 2018 the South China Morning Post launched Morning Studio, a dedicated branded content team focused on "strategically connecting advertisers with readers through enhanced content solutions offerings." We had referred to the Qantas Airways campaign produced by Morning Studio, in an earlier section.

Morning Studio uses various channels to put out branded content including video, infographics and animation, and is search-engine optimised (SEO). The content can be integrated with offline offerings such as sponsored supplements, bespoke publications and customised events, the studio's website says.

Bonnier AB, Sweden

Bonnier's News Brand Studio produces content for a range of Bonnier's properties: its tabloid daily Expressen, daily quality newspaper Dagens Nyheter, financial paper Dagens Industri, and various magazines.

The studio has a "cookbook" which shows advertisers what works

and doesn't work for branded content, depending on what kind of product they want to advertise and where they want to be featured. This presents a brand with various choices about the execution of an ad, including whether to produce a video or not; what kind of article image to use (i.e. a stock photo, an original image, the advertiser's own photos); whether to write the article in the style of a newspaper or go for a narrator); and whether any kind of "special effects" should be included, such as a quiz, a factbox or a listicle. Native articles perform as well as editorial articles in terms of engagement which is measured as active read time, Johan Wilberg, head of analysis at Bonnier News Brand Studio, told WAN-IFRA.

Who is it for?

You need a strong creative arm that can think across formats like videos, podcasts and other storytelling elements. This may involve some collaboration with journalists in your organisation who specialise in these mediums. You also need a strong marketing team that is able to offer cost-effective strategies to compete against traditional agencies. Mostly, you need to have conviction regarding why brands should choose you: what is your particular expertise or your USP? What sort of market can you offer to advertisers?

Challenges

The lines between editorial and advertising can get blurred with native content. This can be a problem if some of your journalists are engaged in both kinds of storytelling. ●

The publisher as an Affiliate Marketer

THERE HAS BEEN a dramatic increase in e-commerce as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic that has also accelerated a shift toward digital economies. Could this be the right time for publishers to fully embrace e-commerce? Even though physical shops may be reopening in many countries, it's clear that online shopping is here to stay.

“By assuming a bigger role in the customer journey, a publication wants to get closer to the transaction and wants to have a higher take on the transaction,” says INMA Researcher-in-Residence Grzegorz Piechota. “Publishers are seeing they really can't make a lot of money with advertising because there is too much content available on the Internet. But we have good relationships with customers, and we can upsell them with products,” he adds.

There are various models through which publishers can take advantage of the e-commerce boom. The most common is through affiliate marketing – sending customers to an outside link and earning the media company a percentage

of the revenue from any purchase made. Key to making this model work is investing in a quality product review section that customers can trust as being unbiased.

Examples

New York Times - Wirecutter

Wirecutter is a product review site acquired by The New York Times Company in 2016. It focuses on writing detailed guides to different consumer product categories and offering recommendations on the best products. Since it generates revenue from affiliate commissions, Wirecutter is less reliant on traditional advertising. Wirecutter was started in 2011 by editors who were intent on helping solve readers' problems and giving them recommendations for retail purchases across multiple categories, General Manager Linda Li told INMA during its Virtual World Congress in May. These include home and kitchen, travel, gifts,

money products, electronics, and more. There is a difference between writing about a product and writing about how people search for and use that product. Understanding that gap and writing rich content is important for conversions and ultimately, revenue. Leilani Han, Director, Business and Development Partnerships, told WAN-IFRA.

Nexstar Media Group - BestReviews

In December 2020, the Nexstar Media Group, Inc. acquired the product recommendations company BestReviews from Tribune Publishing Company for \$160 million.

BestReviews simplifies the way consumers buy products and services across thousands of categories by independently researching, analyzing, and testing products and recommending the best picks. Business Wire reported that the company maintains an audience of 9 million monthly visitors and has helped more than 300 million consumers make informed purchases of consumer products and services. The website makes money by partnering with more than 50 retailers – including direct manufacturers as well as fulfillment companies like Amazon – and sharing revenue on sales generated by its online content.

The deal was partly driven by Nexstar's desire to capture some of the pandemic-driven boost to e-commerce activity, The Dallas Morning News Reported.

Gannett - Reviewed

In July 2021, The Wall Street Journal reported that newspaper publisher Gannett Co. has doubled the number of staffers at its product-review website

called Reviewed over the past 18 months, taking direct aim at Wirecutter and BestReviews.

“The push comes after e-commerce surged and ad spending declined for a time during the Covid-19 pandemic, increasing pressure on media organizations to hunt for new revenue streams and to shore up their digital businesses,” The Journal notes.

“Top-line revenue has grown 50% every year for the last three years, and our projections for 2021 are around the same percentage,” said Chris Lloyd, general manager of Reviewed, adding that the site's staff has increased to 80 full-time employees.

Who is it for?

Any publisher can dabble in affiliate marketing. It is not necessary to purchase a whole site, as the New York Times did with The Wirecutter in 2016. You can earn affiliate revenue by providing links from product mentions to retailers whenever you do product reviews. You need journalists who are committed to and passionate about the beats and content areas that they cover.

Challenges

There is a risk of losing reader trust when you are making money from recommending products. Some publishers, such as the Financial Times, don't use affiliate linking for this reason. It is crucial to always clearly state when and where you may potentially receive affiliate revenue from links, and whether your journalists have received products as gifts from brands. ●

The Publisher as a Retailer

SEVERAL PUBLISHERS are now looking beyond affiliate marketing, finding that while it is easy enough to incorporate links into product reviews they were planning to publish anyway, there are limits to how much they can actually earn. Commission rates from retailer affiliate rates range anywhere from 1-20% for publishers, depending on the product category and the type of deal a media company is able to strike, SHE Media's CEO Samantha Skey told Digiday in February 2021. The addition of affiliate links into editorial commerce content and product reviews are at the low end of that range, she added.

Increasingly, as the e-commerce business model develops publishers are looking to become a one-stop shop for online retail with their own content-driven marketplaces. Doing this, of course, involves a higher level of investment and connection between sales and commerce teams, and possibly deep consumer research in order to ensure that a need is being met.

Examples

Buzzfeed Shopping

In 2020 BuzzFeed introduced a feature that enabled readers to buy the products recommended in its reviews and listicles within the website itself, as they do from other eCommerce websites like Amazon. After its commerce revenue increased by 67% year over year from 2019 to 2020, BuzzFeed is working towards relaunching the BuzzFeed Shopping tab as a destination for Gen-Z and millennial shoppers.

"What is the digital version of window shopping?," Nilla Ali, BuzzFeed svp of commerce, asked in an interview with Adweek. "No retailer does that so well." As part of that vision, Digiday reported the site will have an improved search function to allow readers to search based on product and brand. With a new checkout function it will also allow customers to buy from various retailers without leaving BuzzFeed's website. "We want BuzzFeed to be the point from where

the shopping journey starts," Ali told Digiday.

6 AM City

Local newsletter publisher 6AM City, which in June 2021, announced that it would expand into 24 markets across the U.S., is spending 2021 trying to figure out what a virtual marketplace might look like for its business, Digiday reported. The mission of 6AM City is to have a positive local economic impact, according to its COO Ryan Heafy. By the end of the second quarter, he said his team is working to launch its variation of an affiliate commerce business that acts as a centralized marketplace on its site for local businesses in the communities it covers.

Times of India - MensXP

One of the most interesting iterations of a direct content to commerce model, the Times Group in India acquired a website called MensXP in 2012 and parlayed the trust that readers placed in the brand to create a line of apparel, accessories and cosmetics.

Every month, MensXP, founded in 2009 by Angad Bhatia, connects with more than 30 million men and has more than two million active users a day. It carries content on fitness, clothing, style and entertainment amongst others. Times Group wanted to use the trust of the brand to create private labels. It researched gaps in the men's grooming category, building brands and products in-house to serve

these gaps. Since the company built these products itself, it sees a 70%+ margin, a much higher margin than other affiliate revenue, according to an INMA report. The model is a combination of offering products of other brands and those owned by the Times. It's a full-stack e-commerce business; Times Internet controls all touchpoints of the customer journey – from discovery and demand generation to warehousing and logistics.

Who is it for?

Writing for What's New In Publishing in early 2020, Oregon University Professor Damian Radcliffe noted that the percentage of revenue that most content creators derive from e-commerce remains small. It's fair to say that the Covid-19 inspired e-commerce boom has drastically changed the outlook on e-commerce for several publishers who now want to explore avenues other than affiliate marketing, which only provides viable margins to the really big players.

Challenges

Taking on e-commerce giants like Amazon is no small task, and would involve substantial investment in both tech and quality, well presented content that would encourage consumers to buy. It would most likely work well when the publisher is able to identify a particular niche in the market that can be exploited. ●



PAY WALLS

a primer

Paywalls

Digital subscriptions were already an essential component of journalism's business models pre-2020. But as with many things, the pandemic took a trend already evident in the world of media and supercharged it. In a year of unprecedented challenges, with advertising revenue collapsing, print sales under significant pressure and events businesses having to cease, at least temporarily, a spike in subscriptions emerged as the one bright spot for publishers as interest in news spiked and audiences were willing to pay to get it from trusted sources. The **digital business** platform Piano which provides subscription services to major publishers around the world reported a median increase in active subscribers of nearly 58% from the end of 2019 to the end of 2020 among 320 sites surveyed. Three prominent publishers, *El País* in Spain, *El Tiempo* in Colombia, and News 24 in South Africa are amongst those who started their paywall journeys in the midst of the pandemic. Paywalls may now seem like a foregone conclusion given this boom, but it was only as far back as 2018 that publishers as big as *Wired* and *Bloomberg* eschewed this approach.

Paywalls

If 2020 accelerated the widespread adoption of paywalls, 2021, and subsequent years, could see paywall strategies become more refined in order to ensure that the bump translates to sustainable revenue. A key to this will be **capitalising** on the lessons learned in 2020 where publishers managed to broaden each stage of the subscription funnel – trading content for registration details, tightening paywalls to expose readers to offers and experimenting with both discounted trial offers and long term offers. At the same time, publishers with paywalls also **lowered restrictions** on content around big news events like the pandemic and even allowed free access for certain periods, gaining invaluable information about readers in order to understand which of them are more likely to subscribe, as well as first party data that can prepare them for cookie-less future. A cumulation of these learnings informs the best **paywall practices** today, as we will document in this chapter. The key question for publishers to keep in mind, as we navigate into a post-Covid world, is this: is your reader revenue model built for acquisition or retention?

The Hard Paywall

A hard paywall prohibits visitors from viewing any content without a subscription. Conventional wisdom on this model states that it's most viable for established titles with heavy brand loyalty and niche publications that dominate their area of coverage. The risk of a hard paywall strategy is twofold — by not offering potential subscribers some content for free, converting them to subscribers becomes difficult. Second, a hard paywall significantly reduces web traffic, which could hit advertising revenues that are dependent on page views. However, some publishers have made this model work, betting that if the content is premium enough, there is no reason to offer it for free.



The Economist (UK)

The Economist is an example of a publication which has moved to a hard paywall over time, after experimenting with various levels of access. In 2012, visitors to the website were able to access five articles, with five more allowed if they registered their details. Even in 2017, the company was talking about turning social visitors into subscribers to make up for falling print ad revenue.

By 2018 however, the strategy had changed. Access was reduced to one free article, with three allowed in return for registration. By 2019 it had moved to a hard paywall where readers could see just two paragraphs before being asked to register or log in.

"We definitely saw a big increase in registrations as a result of forcing people to make this decision to sign up. We also saw an increase in conversion rates, and this signalling to us that, yes, there is an upside to doing this, at least

a short term upside to doing this, The Economist's Head of Insight and Data Science, Adam Davison, told What's New in Publishing in 2019. Additionally, once people registered, they went on to read and engage more on the site. This offset the bounce rate from those who did not register and left the site.

The move to a hard paywall has paid off for the company. In June this year, The Economist reported growth, from 90,000 to 1.12 million in 2021, its largest ever increase in a single year.

Other examples

The Times (London) introduced a hard paywall in 2010 and initially saw a 90% dip in visitors. However, it has since managed to recover a large portion of its lost audience over time and through the quality of its reporting and reputation. It now boasts over half a million daily readers and hails the success of its paywall strategy.

ALSO SEE The Financial Times (UK)

The Metered paywall

A metered paywall allows users to access certain content within a specific period.

For example, a publisher may allow users to read five articles every thirty days. When the fifth article is read, the reader will be presented with a paywall, and all other content will remain locked until the time period ends. This is a popular model with publishers because it doesn't alienate infrequent readers or deter page views and their resulting ad revenue. It is also generally more popular in the U.S.

The metered paywall option also allows publishers room to grow and understand the various ways in which users can be converted to subscribers. The most famous example of a metered paywall is The New York Times. Its evolution — from granting the reader 20 free articles when it launched in 2011 to the five today — tells the story of the balance successful publishers now seek between growing the reader base and forcing conversion. Still, research from Harvard's Shorenstein Center and Lenfest Institute found that most publishers are too generous in the number of free articles they offer.



El País (Spain)

Subscription models came relatively late to Spain. After debating for many months which model to implement, the country's biggest newspaper introduced a metered paywall in May 2020. Two months into the pandemic, El País started giving readers access to as many as 10 free articles before asking them to pay. The strategy was a runaway success with the newspaper reporting earlier this year that it has more than 100,000 digital subscribers, acquired in just 11 months.

Many readers chose a monthly subscription during the first few weeks of the metered paywall, but more have signed on to yearly subscriptions when asked to renew. About 25% of its digital subscribers are located outside of

Spain, which may indicate it has more potential to grow in Latin American markets.

Wired Magazine (USA)

Tech magazine Wired.com launched its metered paywall in 2018 which allows readers to access four free stories a month before they're asked to subscribe. The introductory offer is a print + digital subscription for \$10 for the first year, though the price goes up to \$29.99 for the next year.

Wired is a good example of a publisher running experiments to test what leads to reader conversion. There were some surprises in the stories that induced people to subscribe (not all of them were long form pieces



that generated a lot of traffic, as the editorial team expected). Second, Wired found that people were more likely to subscribe if they were referred from one of Wired's newsletters rather than via search or a social media link. That prompted them to launch a variety of newsletters, tied to specific sections of the site. And finally, another finding was that offering a free gift along with the subscription didn't work. At the end of the first year after launching the paywall, Wired increased the number of new digital subscribers by 300%, according to Editor-in-Chief Nicholas Thompson.

GateHouse Media (USA)

A variation on the metered approach is used by GateHouse Media, a publisher of local print and digital outlets in the U.S. which merged with Gannett in 2019. GateHouse's paywall practice is called a "two-five meter": A consumer can read two articles for free, then is prompted to become a registered user, which then unlocks three more free articles for a total of five free stories. The reasoning is that a registered user is four times more likely to become a digital subscriber than an anonymous reader.

ALSO SEE The New Yorker (USA)



The Freemium Paywall

This model has become one of the most popular paywall strategies, allowing free access to much of a brand's content, while placing a smaller crop of articles behind a premium paywall. Deciding which articles go behind the paywall is a value call from the editorial team. Recent research suggests that this type of paywall is currently the most popular — in 2020, INMA studied the 569 news websites with the declared highest usage that were listed in the Reuters Institute Digital News Report, finding that 47% offer a freemium model. While it was previously more common in Europe there are several recent examples of American publishers shifting to this approach like The Gannett group. This is no coincidence perhaps, and is a sign that publishers thinking about reader engagement is evolving away from the metered model which assumes that each story's contribution toward a readers subscription is the same.

Instead, Freemium (and hybrid and dynamic models which we discuss later) lets publishers think about how each story can best contribute to the business by driving subscriptions, bringing in new readers or driving engagement.

A report from the data analytics firm Chartbeat, notes that like metered paywalls, implementing this model requires organisations to be open to frequent iteration and experimentation, and deeply committed to understanding their target market.

Helsingin Sanomat (Finland)

Finnish newspaper Helsingin Sanomat moved to a freemium model in 2016 after it found that its metered paywall approach was not encouraging younger readers to sign up. These readers were engaging with the content but were not paying because it was easy to bypass the paywall with workarounds like the incognito mode, social media, and other means. They would only pay, the company figured, if they could not get to the content without paying. To solve this problem, they introduced hard paywall articles they call diamond articles — hand-picked, high-quality feature stories. Such stories are even promoted on social media, marked with a diamond emoji, to showcase what kind of content is available to subscribers. The strategy helped Helsingin Sanomat grow its digital-only subscriptions 37% year-on-year and digital-only subscriptions by people under 40 by 60%.

News 24 (South Africa)

Online news outlet News 24, introduced a freemium model during the pandemic in July 2020, after studying various international models to see what would work best for the South African market.

Editor-in-Chief Adriaan Basson told The Media Online that the company was "mindful" that many readers might not be able to afford the subscription service while others could be resistant to paying for something they had received for free. They felt the freemium model, where a lot of content would remain free, was the best fit. Continuing to provide breaking news for free is the hallmark of News24," Basson said, explaining that readers would be asked to pay for the "extra stuff" like investigative stories and podcasts.

ALSO SEE Business Insider (USA), The Daily Telegraph (UK)

The Timewall

As the name would suggest, this is a variation on the freemium model that uses time as the decider of when to go up or down. When implemented correctly, and with enough testing, this strategy can increase the frequency of visitors who are not yet subscribers, therefore increasing the site’s retention, while incentivising the audience to keep checking back for new news.



MittMedia (Sweden)

Swedish media group MittMedia, which owns dozens of regional and national news brands, adopted the timewall strategy in 2019 to strike the balance between acquisition and retention. Their content is free for the first hour after it is published after which it becomes premium. The method ensures that readers are incentivised to come back often to the website and the user experience is ‘gamified’ in a sense. The timewall strategy has helped the publisher increase subscriber conversion by 20% and it’s something that could be easily adopted by other publishers as well. In addition, Twipe Digital Publishing has reported that it took the team at MittMedia just two weeks to build and launch the timewall, Twipe Digital Publishing reported.



Dennik SME (Slovakia)

Slovakia’s Dennik SME has also tried the tactic of making content free, but only for the first hour after publication on the site, an INMA report notes in 2020. This idea was then made into the heart of a TV ad campaign with the tagline, “In one hour, everything is different.” The report notes that the strategy encourages readers to stay on the site and check it every hour, establishing a habit. People then see enough advertisements in this time to make it worth SME doing it. This tactic was inspired by the Mittmedia.

ALSO SEE MadSack (Germany), BoiseDev (USA)

The Dynamic paywall

A dynamic or predictive paywall is a model that incorporates an extra layer of ‘intelligence’ over any of the previous types of paywalls. This is a data-focused strategy that finds the people most likely to subscribe and then gives the publisher the ability to turn up or down the dial on the paywall. Those identified as high-propensity users may hit a paywall pop-up earlier than others, or the publisher might adjust the type of offer that appears when the content is gated and the user is asked to subscribe.

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

The Globe and Mail (Canada)

At the very cutting edge of this approach is the artificial intelligence system called Sophi, developed by Candian publisher The Globe and Mail. Sophi powers a fully dynamic, personalised real time system that decides when, or even if, to show a paywall.

The unique thing about this paywall is that it knows when to give up rather than alienate visitors. Here’s how Sonali Verma, senior project manager at The Globe and Mail, described it at the Online News Association conference earlier this year: A reader who reads mostly general news and recipes might be less likely to subscribe than one reading a lot of business-related content. Still, Sophi might present this general news reader with a paywall. If they don’t reach for their wallet, the model won’t hit them with the same message again. Instead, Sophi might pivot, and try asking the reader to register with an email instead.

Sophi uses analytics to make decisions that balance the potential for ad revenue against the potential for subscriber revenue. Some readers might

never encounter a paywall (Verma mentioned a hypothetical visitor who primarily reads car reviews – a strong source of ad revenue) while others might see one every time they visit the site.

The Globe and Mail has credited Sophi with helping it achieve a 51% increase in subscriptions as against its old paywall which was a hybrid approach. In April the company reported that it had 170,000 digital-only subscribers.



Wall Street Journal (USA)

The Wall Street Journal has had a paywall since 1997 and has constantly worked to refine it. Its dynamic paywall model can be described as deliberately porous, testing different ways for non-subscribers to sample its stories.

This system classifies visitors to WSJ.com into three groups based on their likelihood to subscribe (cold, warm, and hot) and it leads to the paywall experience they receive. People more likely to subscribe will hit a hard paywall immediately while others may receive an offer like a seven-day guest pass to help increase the likelihood of subscription.

The Journal has also experimented with 24-hour guest passes for non-subscribers when readers access a story shared by a subscriber or a Journal staffer. This year, as part of its new brand push it held an “open house” on May 20 in which dropped the paywall on its site to let all content be accessible for free for the day.

Schibsted (Norway)

Norwegian publisher Schibsted’s subscription-purchase prediction model was developed by the company’s data science team and has been in use at four of the group’s Norwegian sites since last year: national newspaper Aftenposten and regional titles Bergens Tidende and Stavanger Aftenbladet. The model



SCHIBSTED
MEDIA GROUP

was first tested first at Aftenposten. It predicts how likely readers registered and logged into one of these sites are to buy a subscription, based on their browsing behavior and other activities. It then advertises offers to them differently

ALSO SEE Neue Zürcher Zeitung (Switzerland), Svenska Dagbladet (Sweden)

The Hybrid paywall

This system combines aspects of metred, freemium and even dynamic models. So, while a certain segment of premium content remains locked, free content remains available. However, these free articles will also become locked dynamically when a user reaches a certain level of engagement.

DAGENS NYHETER.

Dagens Nyheter (Sweden)

The Swedish daily dagens Nyheter, owned by the Bonnier group, started thinking seriously about its paid content strategy in 2015. Now, it has a hybrid of three different paywalls: The first, a meter where readers can access three articles a week, accounts for 10% of the title’s conversion to subscribers. The second, a premium model where two or three daily lifestyle articles are for subscribers, converts 30% of prospects. The third, introduced in early 2017, is a more dynamic, dashboard model. “We see what kind of content works, keep it open (freely available) for three or four hours, and if we have a lot of high external traffic and direct traffic, we’ll put the content behind a paywall,” Martin Jönsson, Head of Editorial Development at DN, told a WAN-IFRA conference. According to the publisher, this accounts for 60% of its conversion

rate and an average 50 articles per week hit these criteria.

This layered model, Jönsson said, helps the newspaper focus not just on acquisition of subscribers but how to figure out the right offer and the right pricing in order to get people to stay on for a long time. DN saw a surge in subscriptions during the pandemic when non-subscribers were given free access to the DN website at different points, in return for their email addresses. It led to nearly 200,000 registrations, around 25% to 30% of which became paid subscribers. The Financial Times reported in September 2020, that DN was on its way to increasing operating profit by about 50% to nearly \$20M, the publisher’s best performance since the 1990s.

ALSO SEE Kauppalehti (Finland), Denník SME (Slovakia)

The Donations Model

A growing number of publishers are turning to models that are free but ask the reader to volunteer a donation. This could be a payment in exchange for a membership package with additional access and benefits, as part of a non-profit news model or as an effort to keep news free so that readers who can afford to pay can underwrite those who cannot.

The Guardian

The Guardian (UK)

The Guardian has for years pioneered a system of combining contributors with subscribers. By the end 2020, following a surge of interest and support during the pandemic, Press Gazette reported that it had more than one million paying subscribers and regular contributors. This includes 352,000 subscriptions to its paid-for apps and tablet editions, and 548,000 recurring contributors – including people categorised as members and patrons. It also received 530,000 one-off donations as of figures

reported in October 2020, On its ‘Support the Guardian’ option on the website, the newspaper gives readers the option to contribute £4-16 monthly, £75-500 annually, or £35-280 as a one-off donation. Or readers can choose any other amount under these heads to contribute. Alternatively, the purchase of a digital subscription offers readers access to the Guardian Daily App, The Guardian Live app and ad-free reading on The Guardian’s website.

ALSO SEE El Diario (Spain), The Wire (India)

Paywall type	Acquisition	Retention
Hard paywall	★★	★★★★★
Metred paywall	★★★★★	★★
Freemium paywall	★★★★	★★★★
Dynamic/Predictive paywall	★★★★★	★★★★★
Hybrid paywall	★★★★	★★★★★
Donations model	★★★★	★★

Conclusion. In charting out the paywall spectrum and the different approaches that publishers are taking toward reader revenue we can see some major trends. The first is that paywall models are increasingly becoming more adaptive and personalised. Whether it’s fully AI driven or uses other reader behaviour metrics, there is an increasing recognition that there is no one size fits all strategy. At the same time, while some publishers have found success with a hard paywall model, most are shifting toward variations of a freemium model that understands the differing values of each story’s contribution to the business rather than a standard metred approach. There is also a broad consensus that some content should remain free in order for subscribers to grow.

As Chartbeat notes, building paywalls requires close collaboration and alignment from several teams in a publishing organisation in order to understand the number behind reader engagement but also what types of content or products drive people to subscribe. So even as we recommend that all publishers should adopt this approach, we also reiterate one of our key messages in recent years: before getting caught up in how to charge, it is first essential to ensure that you have a unique, quality product that is worth paying for.



15 Best Digital Product Innovations

Digital Product Innovations



What are the most interesting ways in which publishers are using technology to drive innovation? Building an effective reader revenue strategy, key to building a sustainable future for news media, increasingly involves collaboration across various teams - from editorial, product, data science and marketing. The effective use of technology can tie all the efforts and learnings of these teams together to create the best user experiences and subscriber retention strategies.

Luckily some of the best documentation on experimental news products come through blogs run by publishers like The Guardian, The New York Times and the BBC who are eager to share case studies. Here's what we can learn from them, and others.

1. BBC^{UK} *Graphical story editor*

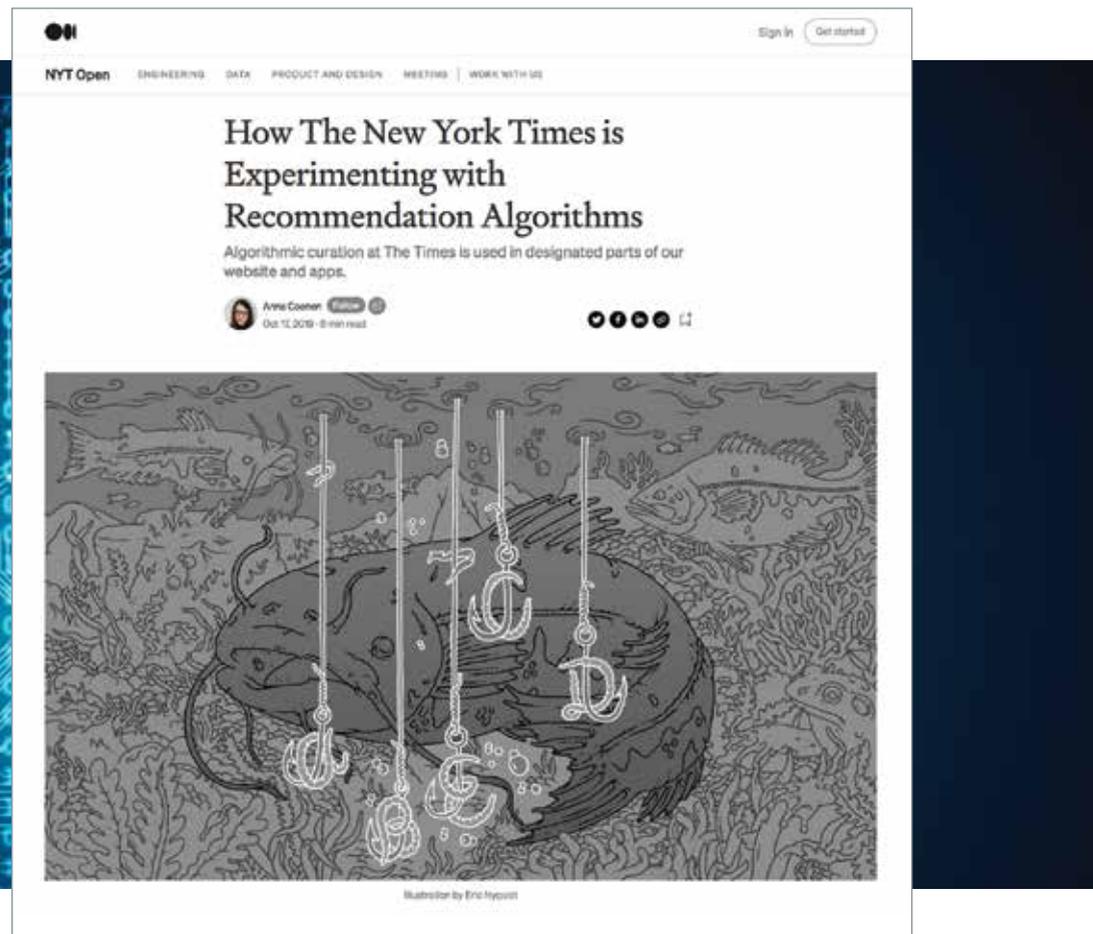
The BBC has conducted various experiments in using automation to convert old stories into new formats or using technology to enhance existing articles. A great example is a graphical story editor, developed by the BBC News Labs and debuted in October 2020, that allows stories to be converted into a completely new, digestible format for audiences on Instagram and Facebook.

"BBC News is now the most popular news account on Instagram with over 15m followers. Our audience on the social platform is predominantly under 25. We wanted to see if we could reach this

audience with content that isn't jarring within their social feed whilst also fulfilling the BBC's remit of informing and educating everyone," the News Labs team explains in an article.

Creating such content can be time consuming if one were to ask journalists to reword their stories and work on graphics. The tool developed by the BBC has a catalogue of images and pre-set templates. When text is fed in, such as the BBC's reporting on Covid-19, it successfully detects quotes and percentages in stories and renders different types of smartphone screen-sized panels. "It was important that crafting these stories felt magical, with journalists' words turning into meaningful graphics without any extra work on their part," the team adds.

Still a prototype, the BBC is thinking about integrating the tool into their CMS.



2. New York Times ^{USA} Article *recommendation through machine learning*

A recent post on NYT Open, The New York Times' blog on how the publisher designs and builds digital products, explains how machine learning and reader input can be deployed to build a better system for article recommendations, one of the key pillars in creating a smooth subscriber experience.

When users create an account with the NYT they are presented with a list of interests they can choose to follow so that stories can be recommended to them.

However, execution of this idea is not straightforward. Assigning recommended articles by keywords and tags used by authors and editors has its issues, as the blog explains: Interests might not correspond to tags for articles; tags represent a literal topic, while interests often represent a nuanced interpretation of that topic based on context.

The Algorithmic Recommendations team within the NYT has for years been applying a variety of natural language processing models to rank and recommend relevant content. And while it has come up with models that outperform the story tags system in many ways the team actually realised it would be irresponsible to let it curate interests without human oversight. Looking forward, the team intends to set up a collaborative editor-in-the-loop workflow with the newsroom and incorporate this algorithm further into our personalised products..



3. El Diario ^{Spain} *CRM system for targeted contributions*

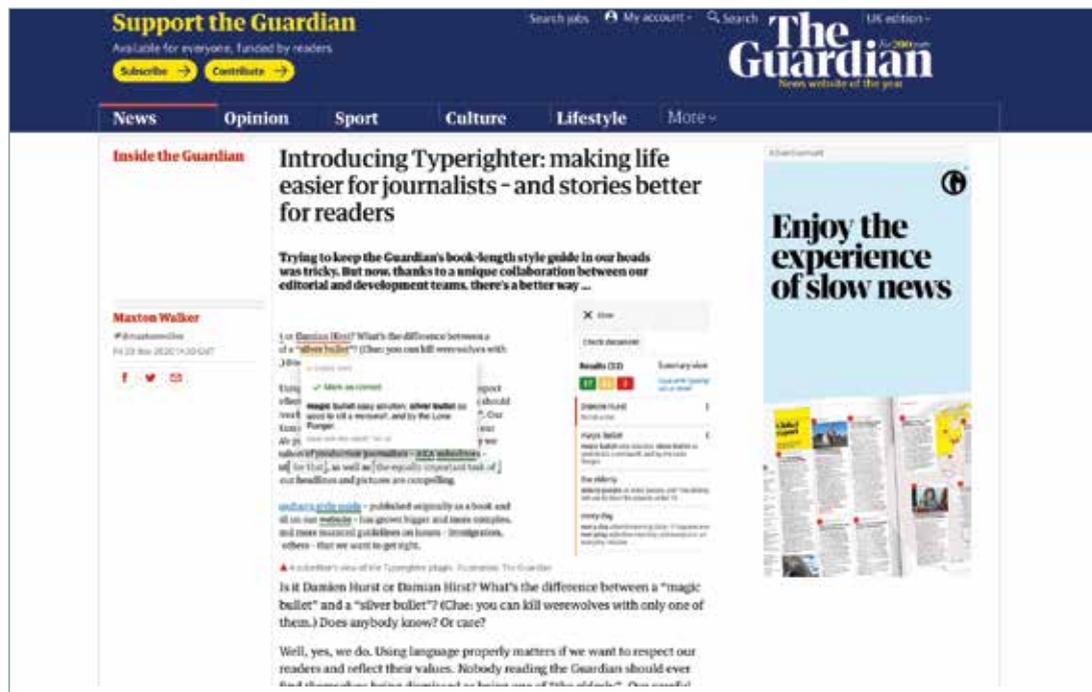
A Customer Relationship Management system is essential for a newsroom dependent on reader revenue like Spain's El Diario which operates a successful membership model. Members pay an annual fee to keep El Diario's journalism free but the model is premised on the publication making its members feel like they belong to a community that shares common values, often referring to them as their 'partners in crime'.

El Diario wanted to develop a system

aimed at identifying and reaching out to individual readers or groups of people who could provide financial support for particular stories or areas of coverage. For example, most of El Diario's seven million unique users per month are strongly interested in politics, but some of them also come to the website because they care about environmental issues or LGBTQ rights. The aim of the software is to identify who those people are, why they are reading El Diario, and provide them with more choices to fund stories related to the ones they are interested in.

"The software allows us to manage things like registrations and information about our users and members in order to know them better, trigger campaigns and offer better stories to fund," Juan Luis Sanchez, deputy editor of El Diario told journalism.co.uk.

Digital Product Innovations



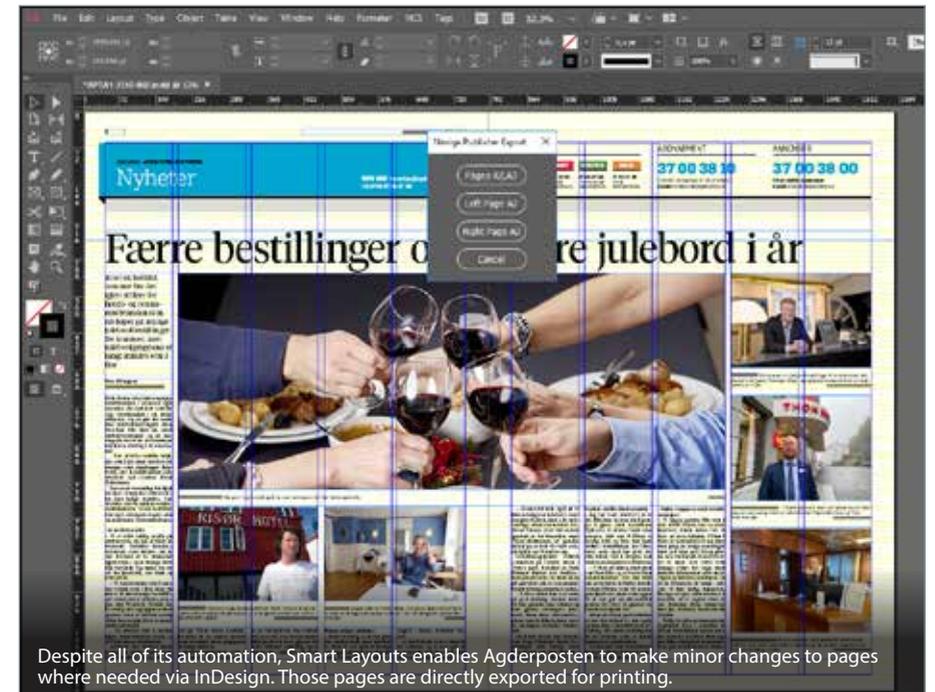
4. The Guardian UK *Typerighter*

In November 2020, The Guardian introduced Typerighter, a tool that takes information from the paper's style guide and flags to journalists when they use terms incorrectly. In Inside the Guardian, a blog the newspaper publishes on changes and updates to its digital publishing, The Guardian explained that over time, its famous style guide has grown bigger and

more complex. It contains more and more nuanced guidelines on issues – immigration, gender and many others – that need to be corrected and checked. Typerighter has been built into the Guardian's existing in-house editing software – Composer.

The blog explains that it acts as an aid to journalists and sub-editors, quietly helping out in the background, but never getting in the way of focusing on maintaining the quality of the writing. "As for sub-editors, we have more time for the other aspects of our job – the headlines, pictures and compelling standfirsts," it adds

Digital Product Innovations



Despite all of its automation, Smart Layouts enables Agderposten to make minor changes to pages where needed via InDesign. Those pages are directly exported for printing.



5. Agderposten Norway *Fully automated print layout*

Agderposten is a Norwegian newspaper that publishes 30 to 60 pages daily depending on the day. They were using two different CMS platforms, one for print and one to convert their print content to digital. Reporters had to work on the same story in 2 different places and its editors spent a great deal of effort to lay down the newspaper each evening. The company wanted to look for a solution – was there a way to produce pages that looked and felt like they had been created by experienced designers and editors – but were actually

built by automation?

Agderposten opted for a content management system called Naviga Publisher, powered by the Sophi.io AI technology developed by Canada's The Globe and Mail. Using the new CMS, Agderposten's editors selected the content they wanted to print, prioritised it, and could also specify how much of the page they'd like to devote to a particular article. Sophi then ran all the AI work behind the scenes to create the print-ready newspaper. This was done without the use of templates, maintaining the look and feel of the newspaper. "Agderposten's editors could hit the print button and be done, or alter the paper as news broke, then rerun the automated process within a minute," writes Sonali Verma, Senior Product Manager for The Globe and Mail, in a post for INMA.

Digital Product Innovations



6. Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung

Germany

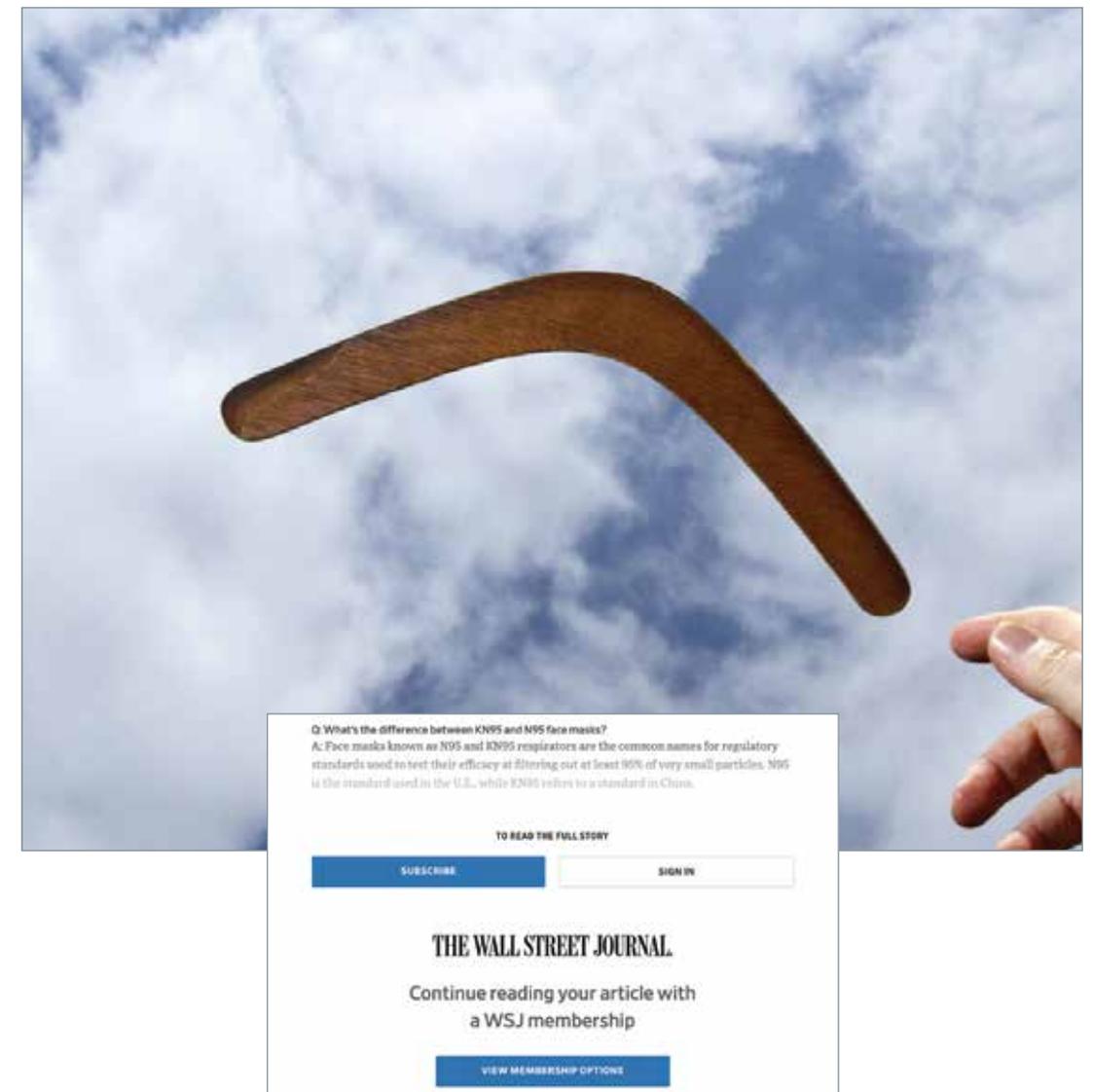
F.A.Z. Personal Assistant

The German publisher wanted to create a product that had the feeling of a personalised service. F.A.Z. Assistant, available only to subscribers as a product extension on the publishers website and mobile app, provides a slick version of this experience, promising to bring order rather than pelt

the user with multiple news inputs.

The product offers a variety of assistant services. Algorithm-based push briefings deliver the most relevant content directly on lockscreen, tailored for every user individually. A personalised email newsletter is delivered to the user using AI to curate the right articles and to investigate the right time to send the email to the receiver. The Assistant also offers a personalised news stream and a curated text-to-speech playlist of articles for times that users want to be updated but don't have time to read. Since the F.A.Z. Assistant was introduced in 2020 the publishersays subscriber engagement – visits per subscriber to the site – has increased 46% per month over the previous year.

Digital Product Innovations



7. Wall Street Journal ^{USA}

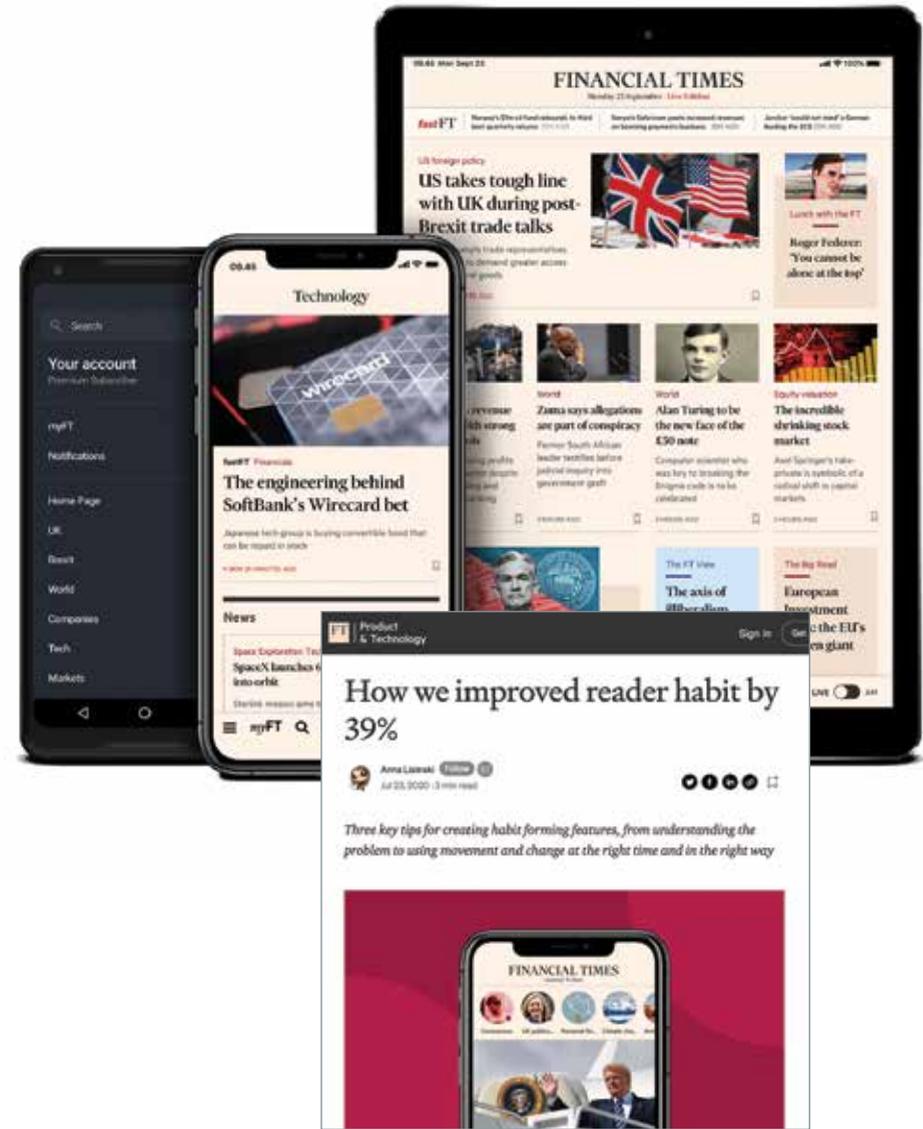
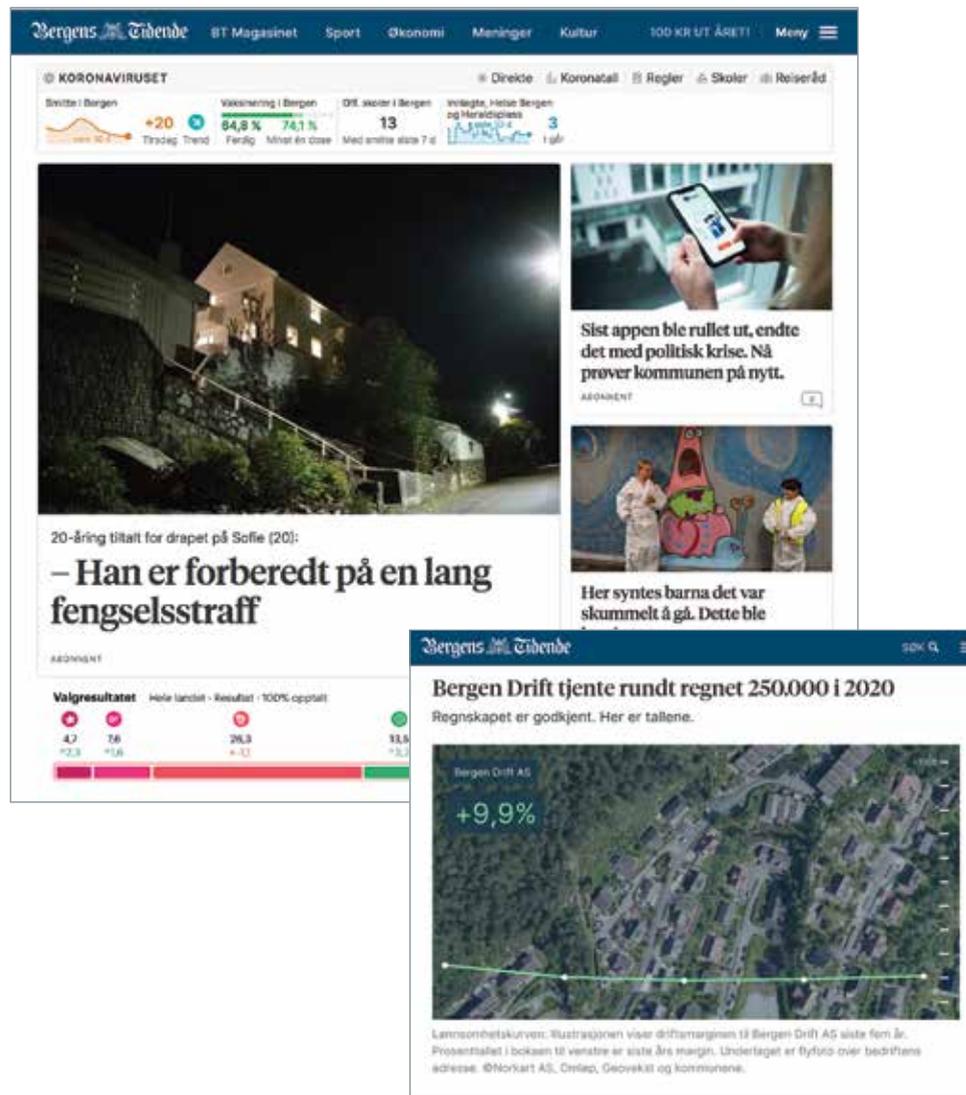
Project Boomerang

The pandemic brought a record number of readers to The Wall Street Journal and digital subscriptions also hit an all-time high. Like many publishers the Journal wanted to capitalise on this wave and get new and less-engaged members (who visit WSJ fewer than 10 days per month) to come back more often as that would improve subscriber retention.

The Journal's digital experience and strategy team got to work on Project Boomerang, mapping out different ways in

which digital products could be presented in order to sustain interest and build durable habits. The team introduced a daily email offering a convenient link to the PDF version of the WSJ's print edition since the pandemic had cut into retail sales and home delivery. Smaller changes also drove tangible results: A new "Podcasts" link drove a 16% increase in podcast plays in its first month and "related newsletter" promotions on stories invited mobile search audiences to sample more of the Journal's reporting.

Another big success was the introduction of the 'Listen to this article' feature which provides an automatically generated, text-to-speech audio version of every story on WSJ.com, which proved to be more habit-forming than their popular crossword puzzle.



8. Bergens Tidende Norway

Automation to write real estate stories

Local stories about the real estate market are relatable for most readers but churning them out is incredibly time-consuming. Mapping neighbourhoods, properties and sales, especially in large towns, is a mammoth task which is why Norway's regional title Bergens Tidende experimented in 2019 with the 'Bologrobot', a piece of tech that creates automated text about the real estate market.

The Bologrobot finds information about

the real estate, like current prices, addresses, areas, changes in prices over time, the price of a square meter, and so on. This data comes from agencies and is gathered by the Norwegian authorities. Then, it finds great aerial and panorama photos from a supplier, supplemented by images from Google street view. These pictures are particularly valuable to readers.

One of the main reasons to work with a robot was to engage more readers and sell more subscriptions. "Since launching in mid-July 2020, we have sold 500 subscriptions from nearly 6000 automated articles. We anticipate roughly 1000 new subscriptions per year. That's five percent of all the article conversions in BT, overnight establishing the robot as the most popular service to our readers," the publication reported in 2021.

9. Financial Times UK

Borrowing the Instagram story bubbles format

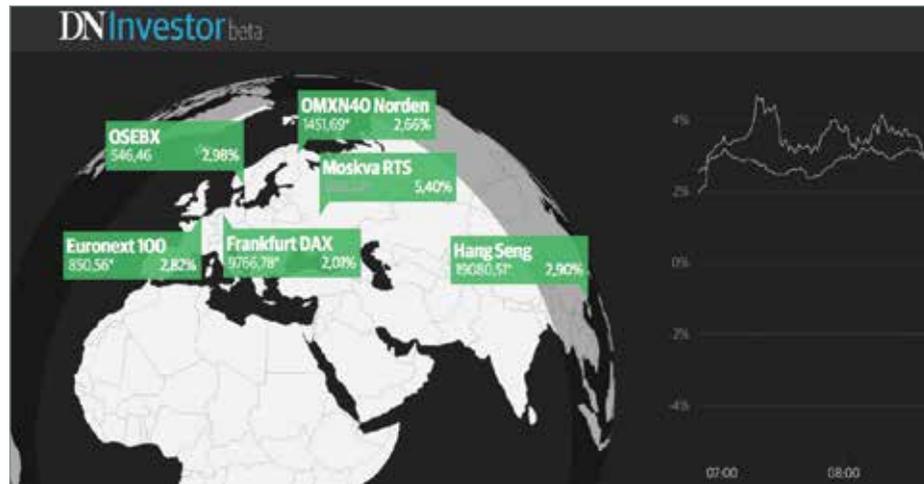
The FT's product and technology team spotted a unique opportunity for growth during the pandemic as people were looking to create new habits. One task identified was to increase engagement with MyFT, a feature within the FT App which enables readers to select topics of interest to follow, thus creating an onsite feed which is customised to their specific needs.

The team took inspiration from social

media. MyFT started using Instagram style story bubbles which moved to the far left to indicate where the most recent articles were published. The use of images and red dots also provided quick visual cues as to a change on the page or new articles waiting to be read.

"Our hunch was that by providing a more dynamic experience which was easily navigable, modern, topic and image led, users would interact with myFT more frequently," writes Anna Lisinski, a product manager for the FT, in a blog post, adding that a dynamic experience is important in habit formation as it creates the feeling of change. If nothing changes on a return visit, what is the benefit of returning? Initial testing showed that visit frequency to the App increased by almost 40%.

Digital Product Innovations



What is Fantasy Funds?
 Fantasy Funds is a risk-free financial literacy tool for the broader audience to learn how to invest in the stock market. By composing your own portfolio of stocks, socially interact, and create your own leagues, you compete for weekly and grand prizes. Read more below how Fantasy Fund Manager helps media companies increase subscribers & subscription revenue.

2x Award winning solution

- The game was free for all and had a grand prize worth NOK 100,000.
- DN's goal was to achieve 10,000 players, the result was 21,400 i.e., 114% higher than anticipated.
- The game managed to acquire 10,000 new DN-user accounts within 6 weeks. Approx. 50% of all game participants.
- The 21,400 players generated more than 10.5m page views on DN.no.
- The Fantasy Funds newsletter became the 2nd most popular newsletter in 10 weeks.
- 24% of players were 25 or younger and most active group.

10. Dagens Naeringsliv Norway

Fantasy Fund

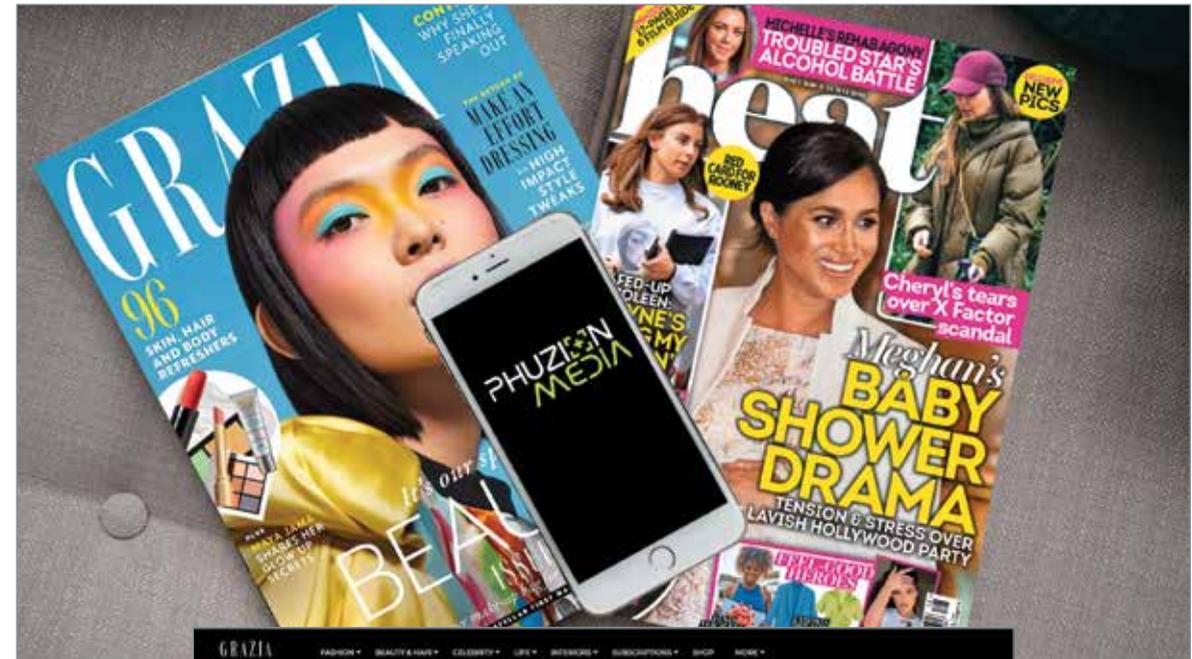
DN is one of Norway's oldest and most respected business news outlets and while its coverage of markets and economy is very credible and respected, bringing younger readers on board was a problem. Audience insight told them that young people were in fact interested in investment avenues and learning more about stocks. The challenge was to reach them in a more engaging way and to do this, DN borrowed from the gaming industry's toolkit.

Working together with a software partner, Norkon Computing Systems, DN developed an online game for its digital

platform called Fantasy Fund where registered users would pick at least five stocks off the Oslo Stock Exchange and test their stock trading skills against friends, experts or complete strangers.

DN's journalists provide market tips and the entire newsroom committed to producing stories about saving and investing throughout the game's duration, DN's Petter Winther told WAN-IFRA. In addition, a young finance reporter was hired to provide coverage of events and developments within the game as well as a pop-up newsletter for the gamers. It ended up becoming DN's second most popular email newsletter. Before launching in September 2020, the goal was to have 45% of the users under 35 years old. However, after the 10 week period, a whopping 55% of the players were from that demographic, Winther added.

Digital Product Innovations



Scan And Shop Your New Issue Of Grazia
 Our brand-new tech.

UNLOCK GRAZIA
 Scan to shop

Anna Maxwell Martin

11. Bauer Media UK

Making content in print magazines instantly shoppable

Tech innovation can also come in the print space. In May this year, Bauer Media partnered with image-recognition platform Phuzion Media to enhance its magazines Grazia and Heat, making products and services within its print pages instantly shoppable and interactive.

The technology allows readers to point

their phone or tablet camera at the pages of the magazine and immediately find out more about products recommended by editorial or shop the adverts. The new tech by Phuzion makes this possible without the addition of QR codes or so there will be no changes to the design of editorial or creative.

Bauer Media research found that over 1 in 3 people read magazines during this third lockdown and 11% said they were now reading more magazines than they were last year prior to the pandemic. Plus, with 80% of people agreeing that technology has made online shopping easier, the innovative idea aligns with new consumer shopping habits.

Digital Product Innovations



12. Kronen Zeitung

Austria

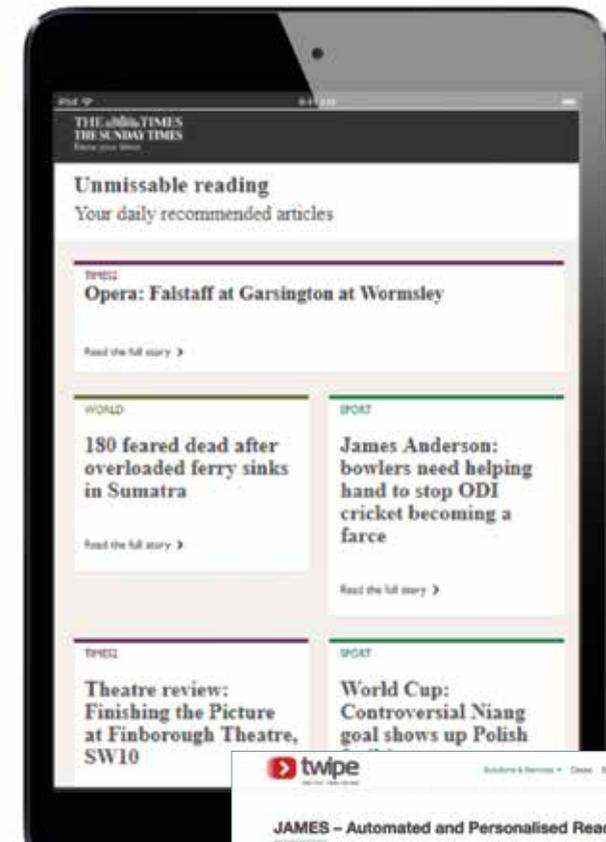
AI to moderate user comments

Journalists at Kronen Zeitung, one of Austria's largest news publishers, see that the audience is very much part of the newsroom. Readers post some 500k comments on the website each month - on top of the discussions on social media - and reporters are pushed toward stories that matter to the community.

However, half a million comments a month is way too much for a team of

human moderators to sift through especially with spam, abuse and other kinds of online hatred thrown in. And so began the experiment with artificial intelligence-powered tools that were brought into the newsroom to help clean up the comment section to make readers feel safe and moderators' jobs less stressful.

The team at Kronen Zeitung experimented with a couple of softwares before settling on a Finnish company called Utopia Analytics. Today, it filters about three quarters of all comments, flagging up words or expressions that may go against community guidelines. This is a huge time-saver for human moderators who can work on publishing the comments in real time. To the publisher's surprise, this increased engagement by around 25%.



13. Times and Sunday Times^{UK}

Tailored emails from 'James'

A "digital butler" known as James (Journey Automated Messaging for Higher Engagement) creates individualised emails for Time and Sunday Times subscribers by predicting content they are likely to be interested in, and then sending it in their preferred format at the time they are most likely to read it.

The company carried out a nine-month trial of the new AI technology in 2018 after receiving funding from Google's Digital

News Initiative and collaborating software company Twipe. According to Press Gazette, the trial revealed that 70% of 117,000 randomly chosen subscribers interacted with James by either opening or clicking on the newsletter. The technology was most effective with the least-engaged Times subscribers, with highly loyal readers more likely to already be happy with how they receive their content.

"James created habits among the lowest engaged groups which are the hardest groups for us to retain," Mike Migliore, head of customer value at News UK, was quoted as saying. James had been used for emails, but the publisher plans to expand the service to channels like text messaging and push notifications in future and could also be used to better personalise targeted advertising.

Digital Product Innovations



14. Aftenposten Norway

An algorithm that reinvented the front page

Like many publishers around the world, Norway's Aftenposten found that its users differ greatly in how often they visit the site and what type of content they consume. Yet until a couple of years ago, the news outlet was offering a one-size-fits-all website experience to everyone. "News junkies" were exposed to the same stories over and over, while less frequent users missed the best and most relevant stories because they

could no longer be found on our mobile front page.

In order to build a more tailored news experience Aftenposten set out to create an algorithm-based approach, combining user behaviour and preferences, that would create a more engaging front page experience that was personalised to the reader.

At the same time the brief for the algorithm was that it should stay clear of 'filter-bubbles' or 'echo-chambers', always a danger when you optimise a product purely for engagement. The Aftenposten front page also stylised editorial signals for content in a sophisticated effort to make sure all readers, even infrequent visitors, are exposed to Aftenposten's best stories and they are given content that challenges and surprises them.

Digital Product Innovations



15. Nikkei Japan

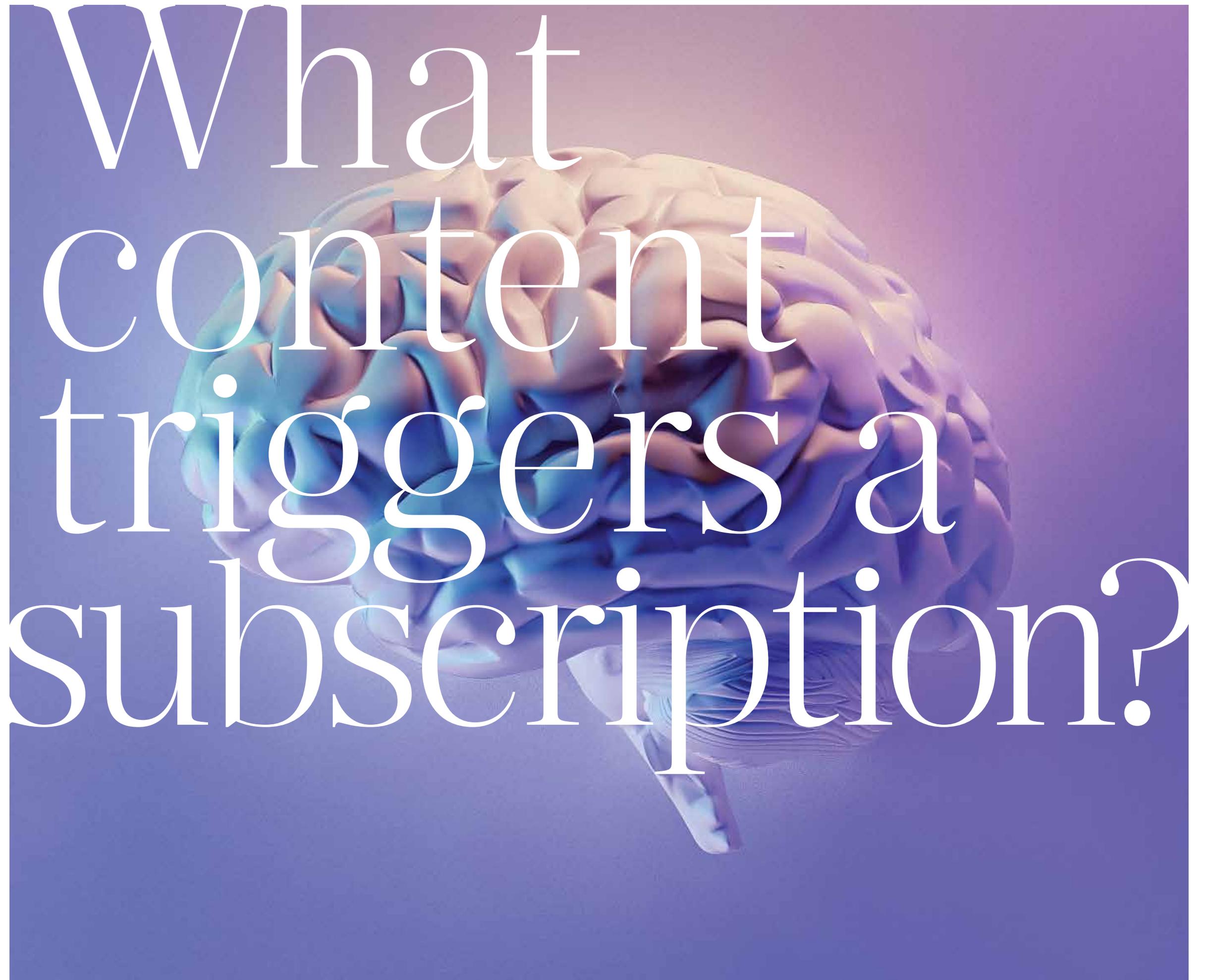
Nikkei Wave Experimental App

Nikkei originally launched its mobile app in 2010. In 2021, with 750,000 paid subscribers and 4 million registered users accessing the app, Nikkei wanted to experiment with offering new features and set out to create a better, more modern mobile app experience.

The result was an experimental app designed to provide users with an improved recommendation algorithm and a simpler user interface. Perhaps the most interesting

feature however, is an auto-generated video view feature. The AI analyzes article data and generates a short video on the user terminal. From this, a user can casually consume content without using too much of their mobile data.

With the Wave app, Nikkei also went all in on experimenting with push notifications. Auto-recommended articles are sent out to readers at 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. daily and it actually helped Nikkei confirm that using push notifications of recommended articles is highly effective in driving user engagement. One of the publisher's key aims was to to increase the number of weekend visits and improve user engagement. That's the advantage of creating a new experimental product!



What content triggers a subscription?

As advertising dropped sharply through much of 2020 it seemed as if the traditional business model that underpinned the news industry was on the verge of collapse, just as demand for news had reached an all time high. At the very peak of this surge, in March last year, figures from Google Trends tell us that demand for news content was actually double that of the average demand in the same period between 2015 and 2020 and triple the average between 2005 and 2010. It was a surge “unlike anything we have seen based on what we know about the historic growth of interest in news over the Internet,” an INMA report on Subscriptions in the Age of Coronavirus noted. This initial peak led to a sustained bump in demand across many geographies as people first came to understand an unexpected phenomenon and then contemplated its long term consequences.

Subscriptions

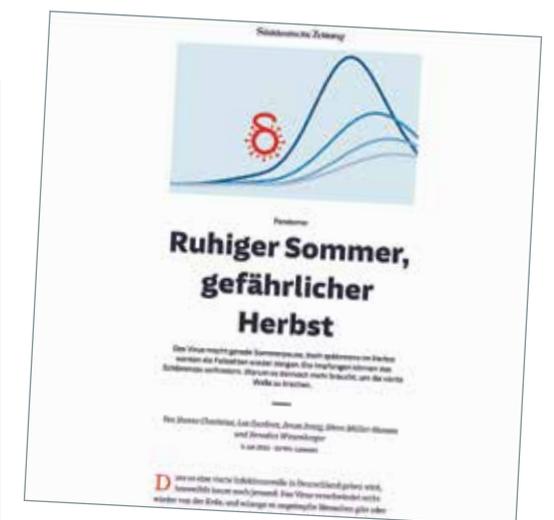
Underpinning this rise in demand is trust in news, which has grown, on average, by six percentage points in the wake of the Coronavirus pandemic, according to the 2021 Reuters Institute Digital News Report. “We can speculate that this higher trust in the news – and in the sources people use themselves – could be related to extensive coverage of Coronavirus. This may have made the news seem more straightforward and fact-based at the same time as squeezing out more partisan political news in some countries,” the report notes.

As news publishers seek to move toward strengthening reader revenue models, the sustained interest in news presents a unique opportunity – to discover the kinds of stories and subjects that are most compelling and can thus help convert new readers or audiences into subscribers; and the formats best suited to convey this content to an audience that is spending more time online and consuming more digital news. Here is a round up of the content that has worked best within Covid-19 coverage and can help publishers chart a path going forward.

Science Reporting

Accurate and reliable science reporting is one of the most valuable commodities during the pandemic and publishers who have made long term investments in science journalism reaped rich rewards. In April 2021, the German news outlet Süddeutsche Zeitung reported that its digital subscriptions grew by over 60% over a one year period, from 110,000 to 180,000. While the biggest increase happened in March and April last year during the first wave of the pandemic, the subscriptions have continued to increase also afterwards.

One major driver has been the outlet’s science journalism, with analytics showing science articles behind the paywall generating subscriptions at a particularly high rate, Marlene Weiß, Head of Science Department at Süddeutsche Zeitung told



WAN-IFRA. Süddeutsche Zeitung has a long standing commitment to quality science reporting. Even before the pandemic, the newspaper had a daily one-page science section in its print edition on weekdays in addition to the 3-page science section on weekends.

The Spanish daily El Pais similarly credited an investment in science journalism as key to the launching of its paywall model in May 2020. The pandemic is, by definition, a story that requires data storytelling, visualization and scientific knowledge. In those fields, El País had already made solid investments, with 12 full time science journalists and a new data journalism desk that was launched in 2019.

Data Visualisations

The coronavirus pandemic saw visual journalism come of age with ambitious data stories that tried to comprehend unfathomable numbers on a global scale but also link it to tangible, personal impacts on individual lives. Data visualisations became the most compelling way to tell the story of Covid-19 and they became a major driver of subscriptions. For El Pais for instance, which now has over 100,000 subscribers since it started its paywall in 2020, 14 of the top 20

most visited pieces have been data visualizations. Two of the most popular pieces, syndicated in multiple languages, explained how “super-spreaders”



Subscriptions

are responsible for the most infections.

The Financial Times found its data-driven living infographic on the spread of the virus, which was updated as new data comes in, became the most-read article in the history of the newspaper. FT put this article outside the paywall, pushed it heavily on social media, and used it to try and expose more readers to FT journalism. A single article thus became a major route for attracting new reader revenue. Similarly, an infographic that the Washington Post published in 2020, using a made-up disease called “simulitis” to simplify the complex concept of virus transmission and demonstrate the benefits of social distancing, became its most-read online piece ever.

of the major coronavirus pandemic, and helping them look beyond.

The swiftness with which newsletters can be deployed to respond to major news events has been key to driving both engagement and subscriptions. The Washington Post for example, in the span of just two months, saw its coronavirus newsletter become by far the most popular of the more than 70 newsletters it offers. The New York Times similarly reported that its newsletters around big news events, including the “Coronavirus Briefing,” “Coronavirus Schools Briefing,” “Impeachment Briefing” and “At Home” had over 180 million opens.

Newsletters are important tools for habit forming, allowing readers to sample

The swiftness with which newsletters can be deployed to respond to major news events has been key to driving both engagement and subscriptions.

Pop-up newsletters

While science reporting and data journalism did the heavy lifting, newsletters have cemented their place across the last year as the most versatile tool in the publisher’s arsenal. Across 2020 and 2021, publishers experimented with various iterations of the “pop-up” newsletter, delivering a curated selection of reading to help readers chart the course

content, as well as providing a publisher with a large number of registered users who can be converted to subscribers. When The New York Times reported a slight drop off in the number of new paying subscribers acquired in the first quarter of 2021, it nevertheless pointed to the company’s large user base – roughly 15 million people are reading on of the Times’ newsletters every week – as grounds that it could “profitably scale paid subscriptions over time.”

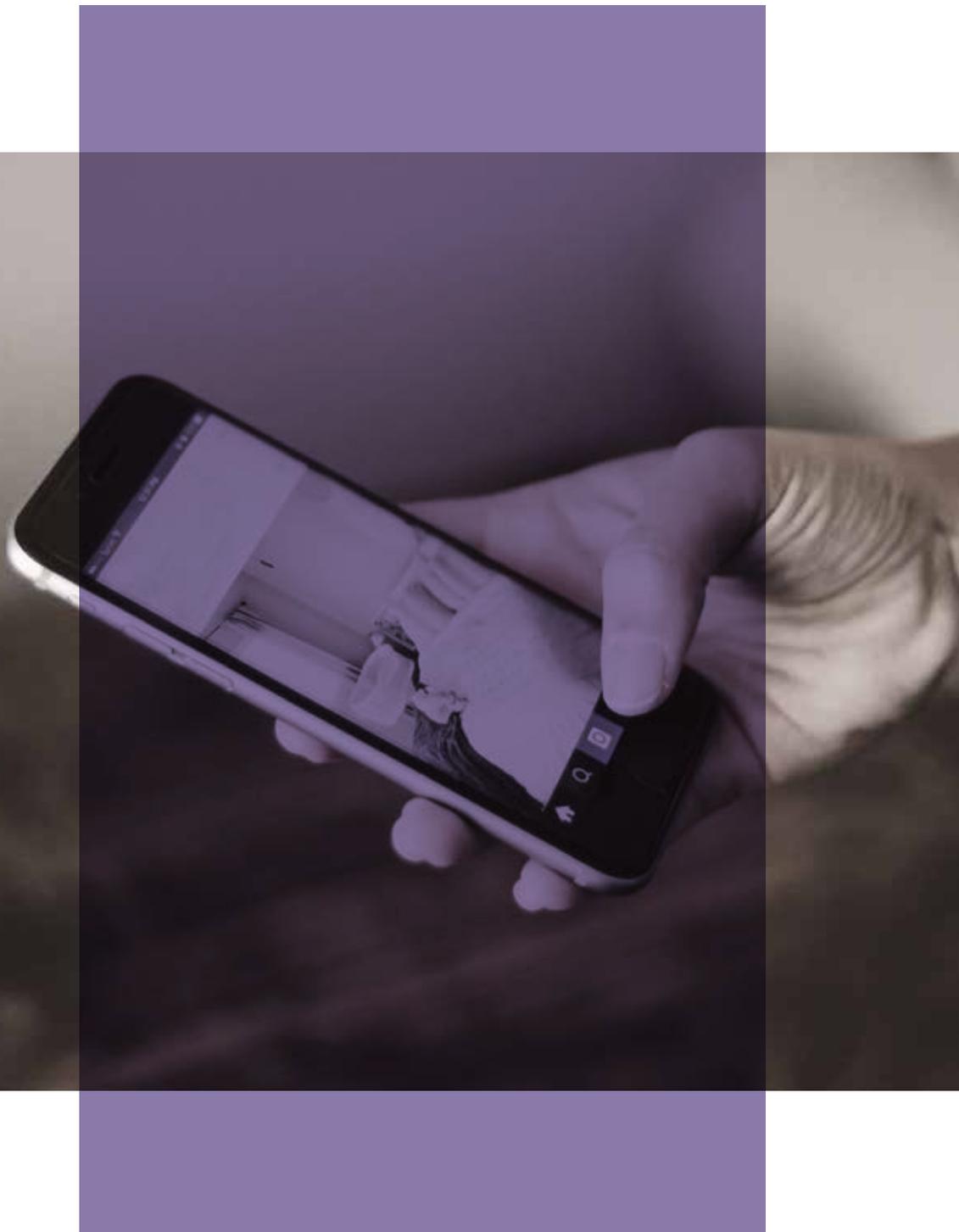
In August 2021, The Times made about a third of its existing newsletters exclusive to subscribers, simultaneously announcing a new slate of newsletters that would be subscribers-only. Similarly, the digital business news outlet Quartz has also made newsletters a central part of its subscription programme, launching four new member-only newsletters this year.



Subscriptions



Subscriptions



Subscriptions

Live Blogs

Live blogging was a format that was picking up even before the pandemic, but its huge rise in popularity during 2020 led publishers to discover just how much the format can drive subscriber growth. Writing for Digiday in February 2021, Max Willens notes that these pages, which include live analysis, live update or briefing pages, and live chats, drive more content consumption, deliver stronger subscriber conversion, and tend to play an important role in subscriber retention. Even after the coronavirus receded slightly as the main story to cover, publishers continued to use the live blog format, for instance, during the U.S. presidential election and even in coverage of the Jan. 6 invasion of the U.S. Capitol.



different angles.

The New York Times, for example, has used its live briefing format 200 times in 2018, and more than 400 times in 2019, said Marc Lacey, the Times's first-ever assistant managing editor of live, a new division charged with driving adoption of the

The strategy that works best for converting listeners [at the WaPo] into paying users is having subscription call outs with personal appeals from podcast hosts.

“The performance of the live blog has been extraordinary,” said Patrick Kerkstra, the Philadelphia Inquirer’s managing editor, told Willens, adding that the Inquirer’s live update format has a subscriber conversion rate that’s twice as high as the publisher’s standard articles. “It’s been a conversion monster.”

As a format, live blogs have many advantages. For one, search engines like them because they have an unchanging URL and publishers can be confident that it will be updated with the latest information wherever it is promoted on social media. It also offers news outlets a balance between putting longer content behind a paywall and still offering readers a snapshot of what its coverage has to offer as the blog is filled with short updates written by reporters, which can touch on a story from several

Times’s live briefings, live blog and live chat formats across the newsroom told Digiday.



Podcasts

2021 has brought encouraging signs that publisher’s investment in podcasting as a medium may finally bring tangible returns. Consider, for instance, a YouGov survey conducted in the UK in May 2021, which revealed that six in ten adults in the UK are

Subscriptions

now willing to pay for online content with 10% saying they would pay to read online news articles. 18 to 24-year-olds however, said they were less likely to pay for news (5%) but more than double as likely to pay for podcasts (11%).

The trend is similar across different markets. The Washington Post for example, found that its paying users, who also listen to podcasts, tend to be the brand's youngest subscribers and fall in the 18-44 age group, thus making podcasts crucial to the company's overall revenue strategy. And the strategy that works best for converting listeners into paying users is having subscription call outs with personal appeals from podcast hosts. The Post's podcast listenership spiked 20 percent

podcast which takes a deep dive into financial markets. The majority of listeners were younger compared to its existing subscriber base; over two thirds were non-subscribers. Earlier this year, the company launched a suite of subscriber-only content – including a weekly newsletter and daily blog – aimed at this section of listeners who are not yet subscribed.

Video and Live Streaming

With much of the world on lockdown for extended periods of time, it's no surprise that media behaviours and habits have evolved and video streaming has received a particularly sizable bump. Can publishers capitalise on this trend? It's not an approach that works for everybody and there are

In times clouded by uncertainty, it stands to reason that well written advice columns will drive both user engagement and subscriptions.

during the pandemic, especially among young listeners, Maggie Penman, executive producer of Post Reports, told a WAN-IFRA conference in June, 2021.

Other publishers have identified developing podcasts as being key to subscriber growth. The Economist, which reported a record subscriber growth of 90,000 in 2021, its largest-ever increase in a single year, attributed the rise to new products. A new podcast, "The Jab," analyzed the global vaccine roll-out while newsletters, such as "Simply Science" and "Off the Charts," catered to growing areas of reader interest.

Still others see an opportunity in converting audiences who listen to podcasts, which largely remain free as of now, to subscribers. Bloomberg is following this strategy with the popular Odd Lots



numerous examples of publishers investing in short news videos without any tangible financial return. However, a few have developed models for video that can help drive subscriber acquisition.

One of the winners at the 2021 INMA global media awards, The Courier Mail in Australia identified an opportunity in

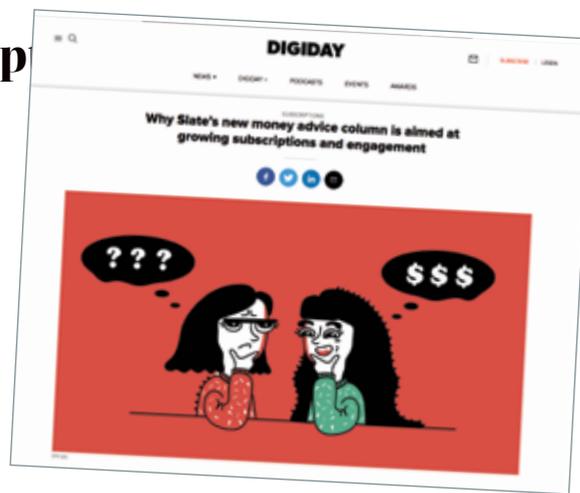
Subscriptions



Subscrip

streaming college sports as campuses were beginning to open and starting sporting events, but parents weren't allowed to attend. The news outlet hired a reporter to solely cover college sport, bought equipment; signed partnerships with universities and started streaming over 500 games throughout the year, even developing a weekly highlights show. More than 4000 new subscribers signed on to watch the games and the news outlet reported that 12.5% of The Courier-Mail's subscriptions came from live streams in 2020.

The Courier Mail is building on the work done in building successful models for live sport streaming by publishers like Norway's Amedia and Sweden's Bonnier which have both seen substantial digital



will drive both user engagement and subscriptions. An excellent example is the series of advice columns run by online magazine Slate which receive hundreds of submitted questions every week and receive hundreds of thousands of views.

Over the past two years, the publisher's first three advice columns – one on

In times clouded by uncertainty, it stands to reason that well written advice columns will drive both user engagement and subscriptions.

subscription growth from live streaming local sports.

A handful of publishers have found success with other genres of video. In 2019, Digiday reported that video was emerging as a top subscription driver for the German tabloid Bild with the news outlet finding that eight of the top ten highest-converting articles were either video documentaries or had video in some form. Bild started putting more and more video content behind its premium tier of content called Bild Plus and found particular success conversions with documentaries, especially those about crime. Videos were either about specific criminal cases or a series on organized crime.

Personal Advice Columns

In times clouded by uncertainty, it stands to reason that well written advice columns

parenting called Care and Feeding, a sex and relationship column How To Do It, and its longstanding general advice column Dear Prudence – saw page views increase by 67% while unique visitors rose by 244%, Digiday reported. The success of the columns led the publisher to launch a fourth column called Pay Dirt, in May 2021, that talks about money in the context of how it impacts personal relationships.

Because traffic is so significant to these pages, in aggregate, the advice columns are the biggest driver of programmatic ad dollars, according to the company. The high engagement has also translated into it being a significant converter of readers to paid subscribers as well, with advice being one of the top reasons people become Slate Plus members, Bill Carey, Slate's director of strategy, told Digiday. ●



Best practice
for setting
up a fact
checking
unit within
*news
rooms*

Research from the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism in Oxford University shows a powerful shift back to news organisations as a primary source of information during the pandemic. The Reuters Institute Digital News Report of 2021 notes that in many countries, audiences are turning to trusted brands – in addition to ascribing a greater confidence to the media in general. “The gap between the ‘best and the rest’ has grown, as has the trust gap between the news media and social media. Debunking false or misleading information is one of the key ways in which this trust can be built and it is a key part of shifting readers toward valuing the expertise that news organisations can bring. Correcting misinformation, whatever the source, can be critical to building reader trust in reporting.

While there has been a proliferation of independent fact-checking organisations over the last several years, fact-checking units attached to newsrooms enjoy some significant advantages. Media companies are able to assemble audiences which vastly exceed the reach of most independent fact-checkers and they are also able to draw on the editorial resources and infrastructure of a larger news-gathering operation. A number of newsrooms have made impressive commitments and dedicated vast resources to setting up fact-check units as we detail here:

Der Spiegel – Germany

The German news outlet Der Spiegel runs what is perhaps the biggest fact-checking unit inside a newsroom. About 70 people work full time in fact-checking and research at the publication’s research library and the department is called “Dokumentation”. The fact-checking operation is not new and is a detailed process that dates back to the 50s, a few years after publication of the print magazine started in 1948, and is now integrated into editorial workflow.

The Dokumentation team is organized by expertise that mirrors the publisher’s different desks, such as politics, science, economics, foreign affairs, culture and sports. These specialists often have doctorates in their fields of expertise, Digiday reported in 2017. Members of the team often work with journalists on articles, providing them with relevant research. In that sense, they have a dual role within the newsroom.

“There are two main purposes of our database. The first is to do the research in the process of preparing articles. The writers department calls us up or sends us an e-mail or comes by our office, and we develop a plan of what materials are needed to research and write articles. In a way you could say that during a working week, the first three days, from Monday to Wednesday, we are researchers and Thursday and Friday we are fact checkers,” Axel Pult, a former checker now the deputy head of the department told the Columbia Journalism Review in 2020.

The backbone of Dokumentation is a database of text articles and official information about notable people, enterprises or topics that could be useful for the journalists at Der Spiegel. Each week, the database automatically adds another 60,000 articles from German and international media and other official sources like government documents.

Grupo Globo, Brasil – ‘Fato ou Fake’

The Brazilian media giant Globo runs Fato ou Fake (Fact or Fake), an effective fact-checking service as part of its digital news offer to alert its audience about dubious content disseminated on the internet. The project brings together resources from eight different newsrooms – G1, O Globo, Extra, Época, Valor, CBN, GloboNews and TV Globo – which are part of the conglomerate.

About 80 journalists who are involved



full or part time in the project monitor social networks, checking messages with wide dissemination. The monitored information is classified by seals: “Fact”, when the content is completely truthful; “Not quite” when it is partially true and requires clarification; and “Fake”, when it does not have proven data.

In November 2020, at a time when misinformation on Coronavirus was rampant, Fato ou Fake launched an exclusive bot on WhatsApp to allow Brazilians to request the checking of content disseminated through the web and on cell phones.

Once a person messages in they will have a menu available, where they can choose between 4 options. By selecting option 1, the person can send a suspicious link, text, photo, audio or video for analysis.

Fact Checking

With option 2, the person will receive the last checks made by Fato or Fake and, when entering option 3, the last checks only related to the Coronavirus. The person will also be able to select option 4 and watch a video where tips are given on how to identify a fake message.

Jagran New Media (India) – Vishwas News

Vishwas News is the fact-checking unit of Jagran New Media, the digital wing of Jagran Prakashan Ltd. which publishes Dainik Jagran, the largest newspaper in India by circulation. Vishwas News started as the first Hindi language fact check site in 2018 and has since expanded into several other languages.

with WhatsApp to counter Covid-19 disinformation and with Twitter to identify fake tweets. It is also a third-party Fact Check Partner with Facebook in India (operating in four languages) and with ByteDance (Helo and TikTok) for a limited number of posts in six languages.

Libération (France) – Destinox

The French left-leaning paper, founded by philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre in 1973, has had a team dedicated to fact-checking since 2008. By 2021 the operation had grown into a sub-brand called Desintox with a dedicated staff of six.

While other publications have their fact-checking teams, Libération's goal is to have the rest of the newsroom publish

Libération's goal is to have the rest of the newsroom publish under Désintox as part of their day job.

The fact-checking unit is a separate desk with separate SOPs, editorial guidelines, and work ethics, Pratyush Ranjan, senior editor at Jagran New Media in India, told an INMA conference in May 2020.

Vishwas news works with a highly structured process, starting from a morning meeting where trending topics are discussed and the day's stories to fact-check are decided. The team then begins investigation and physical verification of quotes or facts if needed before stories are

published every day.

Vishwas News also works with the International Fact Checking Network as one of 73 IFCN- certified fact-checkers around the world. It also partners



under Désintox as part of their day job. "Fact-checking is not for one team; it's for the whole newsroom," Xavier Grangier, head of digital at the publication, told Digiday in 2017. Libération, he added, was also working on a searchable database of fake-news stories that can be accessed by staff and readers alike.

In 2017, the Desintox operation also branched out into a new section called CheckNews which is an "on demand fact-checking platform". It works like a human search engine allowing the audience to submit questions, request fact checks or find verified information in order to involve it in the verification process from the start and preempt concerns of

Fact Checking



fact-checkers' "selection bias." Libération first tested CheckNews during the French presidential elections in the spring of 2017 and decided to keep it as a permanent project after receiving thousands of questions, according to the Poynter Institute.

A 2016 paper on The Rise of Fact Checking Sites in Europe by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism found that while Libération had a print circulation of about 80,000, Désintox attracts millions of monthly unique visitors online, driven by the newspaper and by a partnership with the TV network Arte. The channel includes animated, 90-second versions of Désintox fact-checks on its weekly show 28 Minutes.

Le Monde (France) – Les Décodeurs

Les Décodeurs, Le Monde's fact-checking unit began as a two-person blog but expanded in 2014 after it was rebranded as a separate vertical on the website, producing several fact checks a week, in addition to explanatory and analytical stories. The operation has evolved into the newspaper's data journalism hub, according to the Reuters Institute, and its team of 13 includes political reporters but also web developers and data specialists who produce the interactive charts and graphics the site is known for.

Aside from publishing articles in print and online, the team is also betting big on automation as a way to expand their efforts to check the spread of misinformation. In February 2017, Le Monde launched Decodex, a web platform that allows readers to check

5 KEY ACTIONS FOR SETTING UP AN EFFECTIVE FACT-CHECKING UNIT IN YOUR NEWSROOM

1. INVEST IN THE EFFORT: this is not a single person's task and you must have a team size suitable for the task with clearly defined roles and structure within which the team conducts its work.

2. DEFINE YOUR REMIT: 'fake news' became both a factual and a political definition; the best and most respected fact checking services ignore the political smokescreen to focus on the true lies and misinformation.

3. BE CONSTANT: falsehoods are a 24/7 process, with rumours, misinformation and plain lies being generated and circulated worldwide; don't limit your fact-checking offer to elections or major events such as the Coronavirus pandemic

4. BE PRECISE: it goes without saying that you must check, double-check and triple-check your own facts before you can claim to be debunking others' lies; and owned up clearly and quickly when you get things wrong

5. BE TECH-SAVVY: work with your IT specialists and fellow tech-savvy colleagues to ensure you have the latest tools and are aware of the latest platforms where false information is an issue. Think of fact-checking as an effective product from your newsroom that requires collaboration from various teams.

Fact Checking

whether a website is reliable or not. Décodex allows readers to search a database of around 1,000 websites and social media profiles, Nieman Lab reported back in 2017, up from about 600 at launch. The idea is that once a user has downloaded the extension, when they come across articles online a red flag will appear if the site or news is deemed fake, yellow if the source is unreliable or green if it's ok.

Sites are divided into four categories: those that regularly disseminate false information; those that are unreliable (occasionally publishing fake news, not citing sources); satire; and reliable. There is also a facebook Messenger bot that users can ask to either verify a site or search for information on hoaxes that Le Monde has debunked.

According to Press Gazette, the BBC's Reality Check team scrutinises stories that are heavily shared on Facebook, but are not true and are not from authentic news sites. When they spot a story, the team will attempt to verify or fact check the claims it makes and then publish an explainer or a corrective piece that can be read and shared.

The Washington Post (USA) – Fact Check Column

The Washington Post's fact-check column came into prominence during the Trump years in the U.S with its now famous Pinocchio rankings of false statements. The Post's fact-checking operation first started on Sept. 19, 2007, as a feature during the 2008

“We want Reality Check to be more than a public service, we want it to be hugely popular.”

BBC (UK) – Reality Check

In 2017 the BBC made Reality Check, a fact-checking service set up during the EU referendum campaign, a permanent feature of its news coverage. The service works with social media sites such as Facebook to combat “deliberately misleading stories masquerading as news”, according to a statement released by the broadcaster.

“We want Reality Check to be more than a public service, we want it to be hugely popular. We will aim to use styles and formats – online, on TV and on radio – that ensure the facts are more fascinating and grabby than the falsehoods,” director of news and current affairs James Harding said at the service's launch.

Both Facebook and the BBC are signed up to the First Draft Partner Network, a coalition of platforms and publishers that work together to provide guidance in how to verify content sourced from social media.

presidential campaign and it was revived as a permanent feature. Since then the fact-checking operation has been centred around one major personality – veteran journalist Glenn Kessler who has been the editor and chief writer of The Fact Checker.

“The purpose of this website, and an accompanying column in the Sunday print edition of The Washington Post, is to “truth squad” the statements of political figures regarding issues of great importance, be they national, international or local. It's a big world out there, and so we rely on readers to ask questions and point out statements that need to be checked, Kessler wrote in 2017.

“But we are not limited to political charges or countercharges. We also seek to explain difficult issues, provide missing context and provide analysis and explanation of various “code words” used by politicians, diplomats and others to obscure or shade the truth,” he added. ●

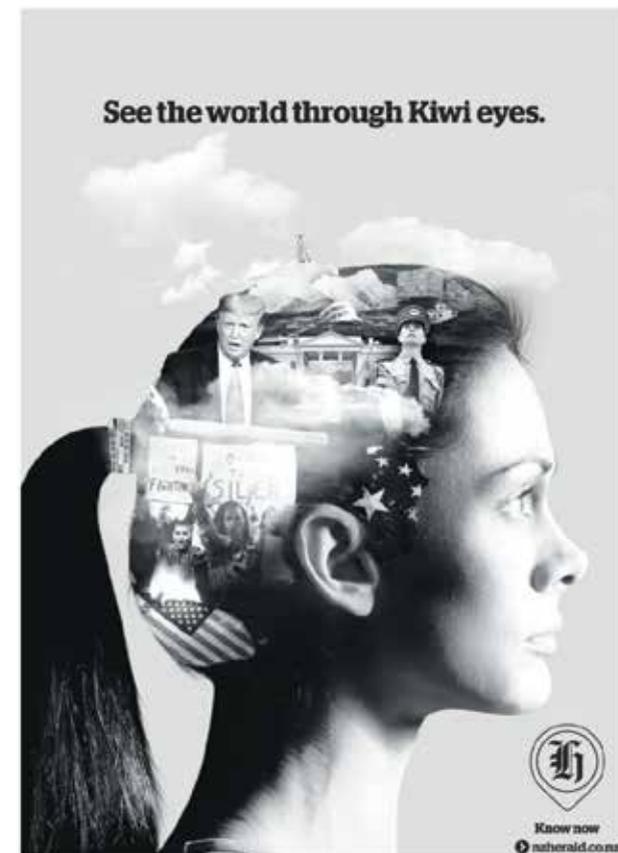


How to Sell Your Journalism

11 best news marketing
campaigns to convince
readers to pay for news

A global pandemic, a historic U.S. election and a reckoning over race and civil rights were among the once-in-a-lifetime stories that encouraged audiences around the world to seek expert information and coverage and place their trust in valued newsbrands over the past year. **The surge in subscriptions that followed was organic, but also driven to a large part by innovative marketing campaigns by news organisations designed to meet this breakthrough moment for the industry.** Ranging from emotive messaging on bringing calm and clarity in uncertain times, to emphasising the historical bonds that news organisations share with the communities around them, in this chapter we give an overview of the best campaigns to sell journalism over the past year.

Marketing



New Zealand

Herald New Zealand

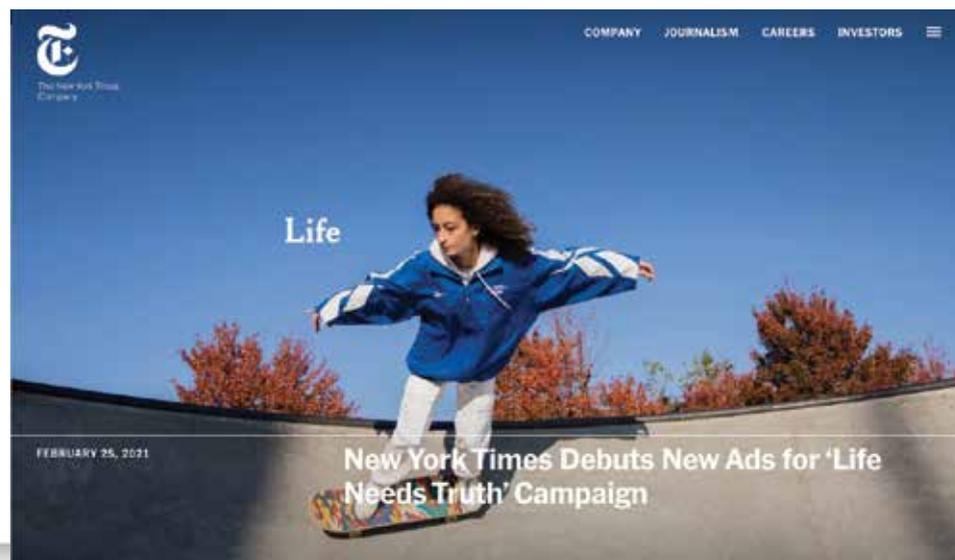
Headspace

A winner at the 2021 INMA global awards for brand campaign, the New Zealand Herald's Headspace campaign was designed to make the publication's content stand out in stark contrast to questionable content shared on social media and more 'surface level' sources of mainstream news. Like other campaigns in this list, the driving theme is conveying a sense of authority and utility to readers during the whirlwind news cycle that began in 2020, and reminding customers of the value of the Herald bringing truth to light. The campaign

centred on compelling photo montages, combining thoughtful headlines with impactful news visuals to draw intrigue.

"The crux of the idea is the portrayal of the collective headspace. There's a lot going on right now, so our challenge was to distil the incessant chatter and commentary into executions that sum up the times we live in as clearly as we could," says Graham Dolan, group creative director of New Zealand Media and Entertainment, the company which owns the Herald.

In its submission for the INMA awards, the publisher said the campaign helped the Herald increase readership by 26% and saw nzherald.co.nz become the most popular news site in the country. The Herald also recorded a remarkable 33% increase in digital and print subscribers heading into 2021.



The New York Times USA

Life Needs Truth

The New York Times launched the “Life Needs Truth” campaign over 2020 and 2021, focusing on the paper’s role in helping readers understand the world around them. The campaign weaves together headlines and images from nearly 100 pieces of Times journalism, capturing the complexity of life in this moment, and is a thematic continuation of other award winning campaigns the publisher has run over the

last few years such as “The Truth is Worth It” (2018) and the “The Truth is Hard” (2019). “Whether it’s helping with life at home; navigating a new economy; keeping current with culture; tracking a new administration; or understanding the vaccines, the new wave of ads from our campaign highlights how The Times can help readers navigate the biggest stories of the day and find moments of discovery and relief,” the Times’ marketing team wrote in a note describing the campaign. Aside from news stories, the campaign also highlights the Times’ expanded lifestyle coverage and service journalism over the last couple of years, particularly its launch of a popular Sunday print section called At Home which ran till May 2021.



De Morgen Belgium

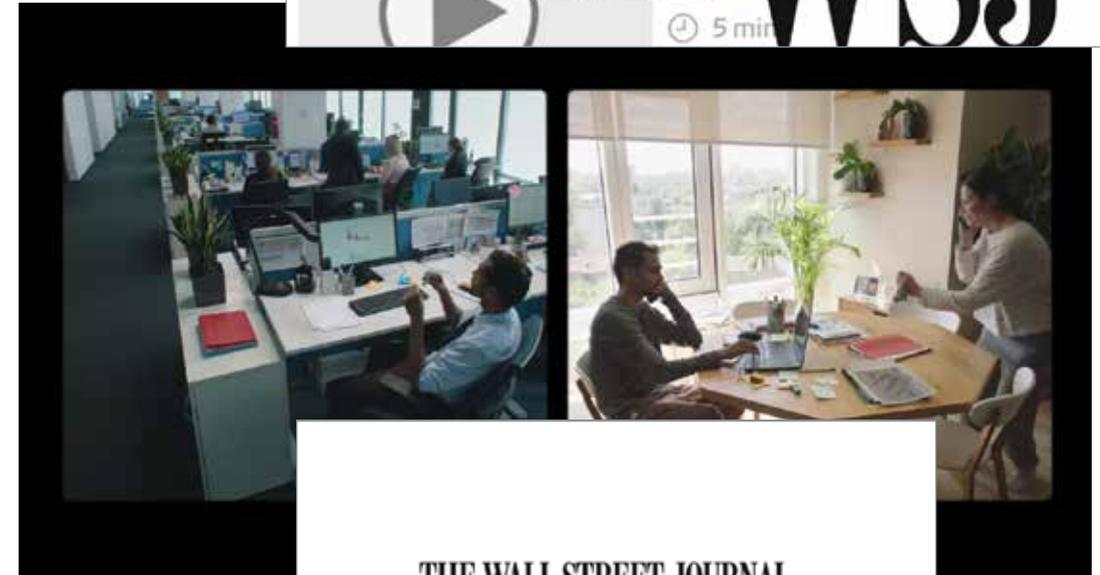
Kaleidoscope campaign

2020 was a year characterised by uncertainty and as it came to a close, the Belgian newspaper De Morgen wanted to design a campaign that would allow readers to look back, and reflect, with a sense of perspective and calm. The Kaleidoscope 2020 campaign, part of the publication’s larger ‘Clearly De Morgen’ branding, does just this – inviting readers to interact with a responsive website with twelve interactive kaleidoscopic scenes: one for each month of 2020, built with elements that represent that month’s most important news items.

Users can interact and play around with the kaleidoscopes as well as discover the news articles that relate to each visual element within. A quick preview of the moving kaleidoscope can also be seen by hovering on each month.

Going into 2021, the aim was both to entice readers to make sense of the tumultuous months that characterised 2020 while also attracting new readers and subscribers by triggering their curiosity. The campaign continued the brand evolution that De Morgen started in 2019, positioning itself as the bringer of clarity in unclear and chaotic times. With the kaleidoscope concept De Morgen managed to increase top of mind attention by 40% and increase the number of paying readers by 20%, the publication submitted at the 2021 INMA global media awards.

Marketing



The JoongAng Ilbo

South Korea

Listen for a Smart Life, Millennials' Current Affairs Friend Campaign

During the initial days of the Covid pandemic the world was awash in panic and misinformation of all hues spread like wildfire. The Korean news daily JoongAng Ilbo found that millennials in particular started turning to social media for news over traditional channels and were inevitably more exposed to fake news.

Under a new audio news service called Listen for a Smart Life, the publisher

launched a campaign called Millennials' Current Affairs Friend, seeking to regain ground as a reliable source of information for millennials. News was conveyed in a conversational tone with millennial reporters approaching issues with a 'let's find out together' attitude rather than an assertive tone. And content was presented through mediums like YouTube, podcasts and social media.

The result was innovative news initiatives like the 'One Health Project', initiated during the Covid-19 crisis, focused on why zoonotic diseases continue to occur and the fact that the health of humanity depends on the integrated management of animals and the environment. "LSL had roughly 90,000 subscribers at the end of 2019. Since producing targeted interactive content, that number has jumped to 400,000 as of January 2021. More than 70% of subscribers are our target audience of millennial women," the publisher reported.

Wall Street Journal^{USA}

"Trust Your Decisions"

Launched in early 2021, the Wall Street Journal's "Trust Your Decisions," campaign focuses on the role the publication plays in readers' decision-making processes in business, finance and in their personal lives. The campaign represented a shift in messaging from WSJ's last major marketing push, the "Read Yourself Better" campaign in 2019 that was centred on tackling misinformation. According to reporting from Digiday, "Trust Your Decisions", was influenced by research from the WSJ's customer intelligence team

which found that 60% of WSJ prospective readers had postponed major decisions (in finance, investing, career and health) until the pandemic was over, but also that WSJ members were more likely to see opportunity in making those big decisions.

The Journal's inclusion of the word "trust" in the campaign's name is meant to give the publication's subscription push a boost. The term is "connected to the willingness to pay," Suzi Watford, EVP, Consumer at the WSJ's parent company Dow Jones, told Digiday. Aside from ads in print, online and physical locations, the WSJ also sold merchandise with the word "Decision Maker" emblazoned on mugs and T-shirts to media and marketing influencers. The phrase was also integrated into the Journal's events and across its business, such as at the "WSJ CEO Council" and its flagship event, "The Future of Everything Festival", on May 11-13.

Marketing



The Guardian UK *'Find Clarity'* campaign

Since lockdown and coronavirus restrictions were imposed around the world, demand for Guardian Weekly, The Guardian's international news magazine, had seen a 15% growth in its subscription base. It suggested that print still had some staying power, though, people may want news in another form to a daily newspaper.

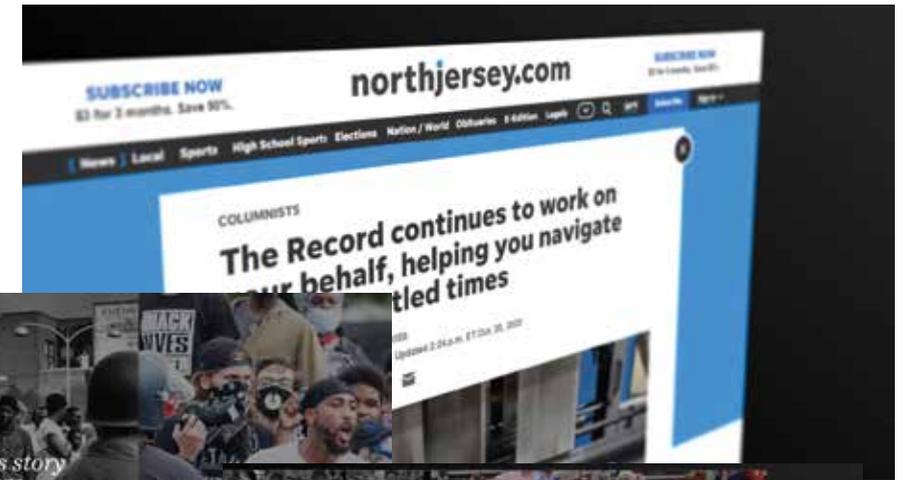
To capitalise on this and attract more subscribers, The Guardian ran innovative outdoor campaigns in cities across Europe, presenting the Guardian Weekly

as a way for readers to digest global news differently. The Drum reported that the campaign, illustrated by surrealist artist Rafael Alejandro, depicted three global news events - coronavirus, Trump and the environment.

Each design runs with an accompanying statement that 'the world is...' 'confusing' (coronavirus), 'absurd' (Trump), and 'in crisis' (the environment). The cover of this week's Guardian Weekly appears next to the illustrations, inviting people to 'find clarity', with the clustered imagery juxtaposed against the calm, clear Guardian Weekly magazine.

The 'street takeover' style, with striking billboards, also formed a central part of The Guardian's 'Work in Progress' campaign, launched to celebrate the paper's 200th anniversary in 2021.

Marketing



USA Today Network/ Gannett USA *Campaign to Showcase Our Journalism's Impact in Local Communities*

Gannett's USA Today Network is the largest local-to-national digital media organization in the U.S. The national daily USA TODAY sits at the centre of this network, with over 300 local digital properties across 46 states. Gannett's campaign sought to showcase the strength of this local connect, with thousands of reporters across its network reporting on the cultural moments shaping communities – over the years and right

through the chaos and uncertainty of 2020.

"We did this by telling the story of our journey together. We have deep roots in our local communities, many dating back nearly 200 years. The campaign focused on issues that faced us both in the past and in 2020 as proof points that our journalists have always been and will always be at the center of each communities' stories unfolding," the publisher wrote in a note describing the campaign. To juxtapose the past and present, the USA Today network utilised its extensive photo archives to showcase the longevity of coverage, whether through the lens of civil rights or the unfolding health crisis.

The campaign was launched in twenty of the network's largest markets with print ads and a digital campaign that featured interactive and seamless scrolling from image to image, to explore comparison and similarities between two moments in history. It campaign drove over 39 million impressions and 31,000 subscriptions across the network, Gannett submitted at the 2021 INMA awards.

Marketing



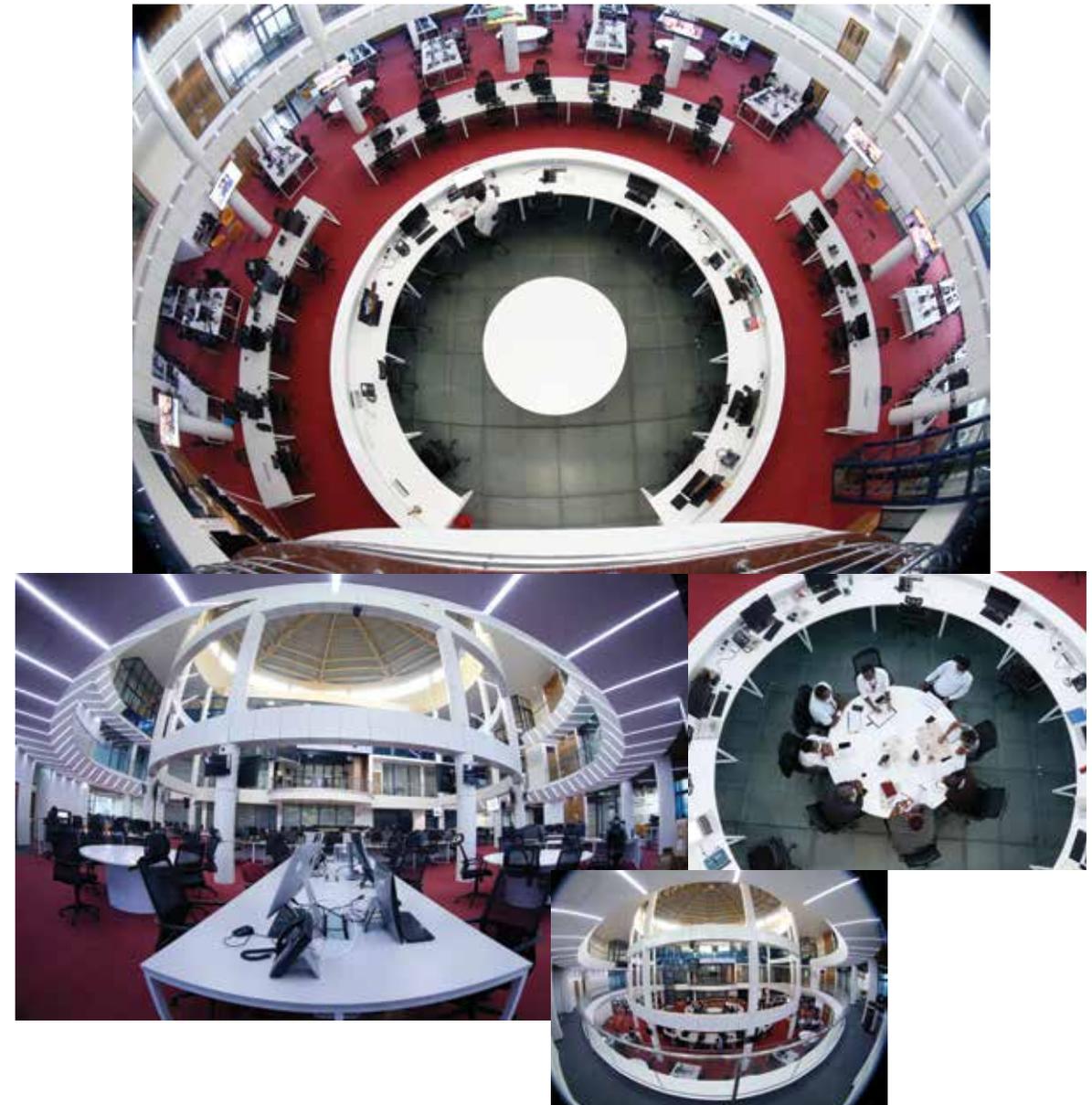
South China Morning Post Hong Kong *Your Hong Kong* *Your SCMP*

SCMP's objective with this brand campaign was to showcase its history of reporting on the issues that matter to local readers. The campaign was launched at a critical time for the newspaper, coming just ahead of the publication bringing back its digital paywall in May 2020 as revenues began to fall.

"Reminding our audience that we have supported Hong Kong with balanced, truthful news for over a century was a major requirement in communicating a reason to believe in and purchase our digital subscription product," SCMP submitted at the 2021 INMA awards.

Over the last three years SCMP has expanded operations into North America, Southeast Asia and Europe. Even as it evolves into a global news brand, the purpose of the campaign was to remind Hong Kong readers that despite this growth, SCMP remained committed to covering the stories that matter in its home base. The campaign sought to balance a legacy element, with plenty of nostalgia from SCMP's historic reporting, with a look and feel that was younger and nodded to the organisation's willingness to embrace digital transformation. "During the 2-week period where our brand campaign launched and was live, SCMP achieved over 1 million organic house ad and video impressions which resulted in a 106% increase in paid subscriptions," the publisher reported. Through the campaign it also discovered that Hong Kong readers were the largest audience segment purchasing subscriptions.

Marketing



The Standard Group Kenya *Project Eagle*

In some cases, a great marketing campaign takes years to define and requires structural change within the organisation. Project Eagle is the name given to the campaign that surrounded the launch of the paid-for digital content strategy launched by Kenya's Standard Group in 2020 and 2021. The underlying work for the campaign started in 2017, with the group unveiling several projects across traditional and digital media platforms. This included the launch of three

radio stations and an extreme makeover of the website and the newspaper to make them more user-friendly. The initiative was crowned by the unveiling of a modern converged newsroom in 2020 which would see journalists and editors seamlessly connect on various digital platforms.

Project Eagle was selected as a winner at WAN-IFRA's 2021 African Digital Media Awards in the category of best brand awareness campaign. "What is interesting about this campaign is the preparatory work done to understand the users in order to define messages that will convince readers to pay. Six months after the launch of the paywall, Standard had the outstanding results of convincing almost 400,000 users to register and 5% of them to pay," the jury noted.

Marketing



El País, by the numbers.

- El País (Media Group PRISA) is the most read and the most internationally recognized Spanish newspaper.
- A global outlet, readers and subscribers come from all continents, with a strong footprint in Mexico, Colombia but also Brazil and all other South American countries.
- With around 3.5 Mio registered users, El País introduced a metered paywall on the 1st May 2020. After the first wave of the pandemic and less than a year, it amassed 90,000 paying subscribers, more than double of the print subscribers. The monthly subscription in Spain costs 10 EUR a month, and it is half of that price

Borja Echevarría, the managing editor of El País, described their road to develop a subscription-based model in a recent webinar hosted by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (17th Feb 2021): you find the recording embedded at the end of this post.

The long road that took to installing a paywall.

The pandemic was unexpected, but it found a road already paved for that in the previous 18 months. El País spent the last two years investing in a registration paywall: launching editorial content and services to get subscribers, like a rich newsletter portfolio. The original plan was to launch the paywall at the begin of 2020, but then the pandemic happened.

Given the circumstances, the decision was to keep all information free for at least a couple of months and help new and old visitors to develop habits. March and April 2020 were the months when El País hit its highest traffic ever: over 180 unique browsers a month.

El País Spain

Launch of a metered paywall during the Coronavirus pandemic

For other publishers, circumstances can collude to provide an organic push toward changing strategy. Spain's El País, one of the country's highest circulated newspapers, had been planning to move its digital content behind a paywall since 2017-18. After much debate, the date for the launch of the paywall was initially set for March 1, 2020, but when Covid-19 hit just a month before the launch, a decision was made to change strategy.

Managing editor Borja Echevarría, speaking at a webinar organised by

the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, said the publication saw an opportunity to build a stronger relationship with readers rather than starting the paywall straight away. During March and April, the team built a different narrative similar to a membership model. "We told them we were not starting the paywall but people could still subscribe and start paying." This was also the time El País saw its highest numbers in terms of traffic with 180 million unique visitors and 1 billion page views in April 2020.

"We thought we could spend those months showing the importance of the kind of journalism we do and in many ways I think instead of a traditional marketing campaign the Covid-19 pandemic became our best communications and marketing campaign," Echevarría added. El País' paywall was, of course, a runaway success with the publication going from zero to over 100,000 paying subscribers by mid-2021.



Financial Times

"Letters to This New World"

Launched in late September 2021, The Financial Times' new campaign, "Letters to This New World", calls on readers to reflect on life before and after the pandemic and hopes to give a voice to the lessons learned as we look to shape the future.

Developed by The Brooklyn Brothers agency, the campaign is part of the evolution of the FT's 'New Agenda' brand platform, which promotes the newspaper as the "leading destination for analysis and leadership on the most important global trends and themes", art and design magazine Creative Boom reported.

The ads feature a series of hard-hitting open letters addressing serious themes like climate change, the world of work, digital finance and global inequality. FT

journalists including Martin Wolf, Gillian Tett, Pilita Clarke, John Burn-Murdoch, Sarah O'Connor and Paul Murphy have all contributed.

Interestingly, Creative Boom reported that all FT employees were invited to contribute to the campaign while members of the public will also be invited to submit their own letters, with the strongest contributions to be featured in future advertisements. "The pandemic has given everyone pause to reflect on what matters in life and how we could organise ourselves differently in future," says Finola McDonnell from the FT. "We wanted to capture some of those reflections and put them out there for business leaders and those in positions of power to think about and act upon. We are at an inflection point, and the FT is positioned to encourage and lead a debate about what comes next."

The campaign comes after a record 2020 for the Financial Times when readership and subscriptions saw a surge as the pandemic took hold globally.

WAN-IFRA initiatives to transform newsrooms

The World Association of News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) strives to help its members succeed with their ongoing transformation strategies. A number of new initiatives are having a big impact on doing just that – in addition to WAN-IFRA’s commitment to deliver global insights, research and events that feature best-practice from around the world.

Table Stakes Europe

In the past two years, more than 30 news publishers from European newsrooms have participated in the first two rounds of WAN-IFRA’s Table Stakes deep-dive programme, supported by the Google News Initiative. What does Table Stakes mean? In terms of local journalism, the question begs: “What are the minimum requirements to be in the game of local journalism?”. The phrase “Table Stakes” comes from poker – the amount required to have a seat at the table.

It was initially launched in the US in 2015 as the Knight-Temple Table Stakes project. Developed with major metropolitan daily news organizations in the US, it is meant to accelerate journalism’s shift to digital from print, help newsrooms evolve their practices, reach new audiences and better engage their communities.

“Table Stakes takes the big picture perspective, from defining audiences through to monetisation, all based on the input of US publishers who have been forced to innovate faster over the last decade under extreme financial pressure,” says Nick Tjaardstra, TSE coach and WAN-IFRA’s Executive Director of the Digital Revenue Network. The third round of the programme is taking applications now.

Newsroom & Business Transformation Programme

Last year WAN-IFRA launched the “Newsroom & Business Transformation Programmes” in Asia and the Middle East and is now launching the same in the Latin American region, with the support of the Facebook Journalism Project.

A good example of the programme is the focus in Latin America where news organisations are participating that are in the process of launching their first products or paid content strategies. It will bring together executives from the editorial and business areas of each participating company during 4 months of training.

The topics are focused on the opportunities and challenges faced by the launching of a reader revenue strategy: strategy and culture, business, audience and operations.

“The news sector in Latin America has clearly integrated paid content strategies as an avenue worth exploring in its quest for new digital revenues,” said Rodrigo Bonilla, Director for the Americas at WAN-IFRA. “But for most media outlets, technical hurdles and uncertainty about the viability of the investment still abound. This programme is unique in that it aims to address these challenges and thus help our partners ‘leapfrog’ to greater sustainability in the digital age of their businesses.” ●



World Association
of News Publishers

From Media Companies to Information Engines

INNOVATION is a leading global media consulting company based in London (UK), founded 35 years ago, working with more than 100 media and management consultants fluent in 27 languages in almost 60 countries, which:

- Develops and implements strategic plans for diversification, convergence and full multimedia integration.
- Plans, directs and implements high quality editorial projects for the modernisation of newsroom management, graphic presentation, tablet applications, mobile media, and editorial content to drive greater advertising revenues and increased circulation.
- Produces detailed and unique editorial multimedia integration models and news operations manuals, including news workflows for INNOVATION's state-of-the-art open-space newsrooms.
- Organises tailored in-house training programs for journalists and publishing executives.
- Works with family-owned media companies to successfully navigate generational changes.
- Publishes reports and newsletters on global media trends, including a quarterly Confidential Newsletter in English and Spanish.
- Produces an annual report on Innovations in News Media for the World Association and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA). Published since 1999, the report appears in English and several other languages including Russian, Arabic and Chinese.
- Publishes (since 2010) an annual report on trends in the magazine industry for the London-based International Federation of the Periodical Press (FIPP). The report is published in English and Chinese.

Our Vision

INNOVATION believes that old style media companies must become "multimedia information engines™". We firmly believe that good journalism is good business, and we believe that an information company's first responsibility is to be profitable because without profitability there is no independence, and without independence there is no credibility. Without credibility there is no audience, and without an audience there is no advertising. These new 'Multiplatform Information and Marketing Solution Engines™' must lead from Readers to Audiences, and from Audiences to Communities.

How we operate

We believe that change should not be imposed but negotiated and based on consensus. We do not believe in magic formulas. Every project is unique. Every market is different. Every company has its own characteristics. Every newsroom has its own culture and personality. We are not a general management consulting company. Journalism is in our DNA. We come from the industry and speak its language. Although all our projects are tailored to the client's specific requirements, they always include three key steps: analysis, implementation and follow-up. All three are critical elements in any consulting project.

The change process

Analysis, implementation and follow-up are the three main phases of INNOVATION's editorial, graphic, technical, management, and business change processes. We do not believe in cosmetic changes or miracles. Every serious project requires time and reflection. Improvisation only leads to failure. We work closely with our clients' and professional staffs. INNOVATION projects build on close creative interaction between our clients and our consultants. Success is heavily dependent on follow-up, training and implementation. ●

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