[NL] The Dutch Media Authority publishes the report on news consumption by young people

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On 1 October 2024, the Dutch Media Authority (‘*Commissariaat voor de Media’*) published the report ‘Young people, news and social media. A look at the future of the news’. It posits that since young people increasingly rely on social media rather than traditional media to stay updated on current events, news consumption, in general, is undergoing both massive and permanent transformation. The media routines that young people are developing now determine their media behaviour in the future. The report highlights the main implications of the increasing role of social media in news delivery and presents recommendations for media organisations.

The report is based on a large-scale survey among young people (16-24 years, 2,010 participants) and more senior news consumers (40-65 years, 497 participants). Its key finding is that 78% of young people use social media to stay informed about what is going on in the world. Although 48% of young people also use news websites and apps, they encounter news primarily on social media through automated notifications. The large majority of both young and older people (94%) trust the news they see online. The familiarity and reputation of media organisations play an important role in creating trust for the information they disseminate. Social media groups or channels do not produce news themselves but reproduce it from other sources. Since young people’s interest in news increases with age, there is a strong demand for quality journalism accesible via social media. However, media organisations are still reluctant to be present on social media. Since private organisations earn their revenue from subscriptions or advertisements through their own websites but cannot do the same on social media platforms, reaching young people with youth-oriented journalism offerings is challenging. As a result, large tech firms, through their algorithms, continue to have a far-reaching influence on the type of news users see online. According to the Dutch Media Authority, this could undermine the future of journalism and adversely impact democratic discourse in the long term.

In view of the identified challenge, the Dutch Media Authority outlined four main strategies for safeguarding a pluriform media landscape and enabling traditional media outlets to establish a stronger connection to their younger audience. Above all, news organisations should make news visible, accessible, and recognisable to young people. This could be achieved primarily by developing a youth-oriented approach to social media. Additionally, since social media platforms do not offer

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proper revenue models for news organisations, (temporary) incentive measures, such as tax incentives or subsidies, would incentivise the news sector to put in place initiatives specifically aimed at young people. Further regulatory measures targeting social media platforms would also stimulate the emergence of revenue models beneficial for media organisations. According to the Dutch Media Authority, existing EU-wide and national legislation remains insufficient and would benefit from more precise definitions and a broader scope. Finally, it is important to enhance young people's media literacy, enabling them to distinguish professionally created news from other forms of reporting and recognise misinformation. The recommendations are expected to increase the trust in journalism, which is crucial for a well-functioning democracy.

Dutch Media Authority, report 'Young people, news and social media. A look at the future of the news' (1 October 2024)

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