

How to Reach Swiss Digital Natives with News. A Qualitative Study

Final Report, December 11, 2020

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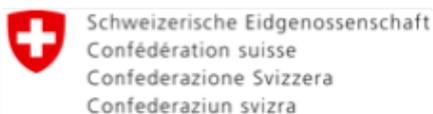
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Funded by:



Eidgenössisches Departement für
Umwelt, Verkehr, Energie und Kommunikation UVEK
Bundesamt für Kommunikation BAKOM

Executive Summary

The media significantly contribute to shaping public opinion and social participation. However, news media are increasingly confronted with the challenge of not reaching younger people. The present study, "Reaching Swiss Digital Natives with News", aims to provide solutions by analyzing the demands and expectations of young people regarding news, as well as their media behavior, their activities associated with news consumption, and their media literacy.

The study was conducted from August 2019 to February 2020 by the IAM Institute for Applied Media Studies at the ZHAW Zurich University of Applied Sciences in collaboration with the Universities of Lugano (USI) and Lausanne (UNIL). The study participants were 66 young people aged 12 to 20 years from three Swiss language regions (German-, French-, and Italian-speaking Switzerland). The data was collected in all three language regions with a qualitative multi-method approach. First, interviews were conducted to gain insight into the everyday world of the young people and determine topics for the focus groups. The focus groups provided information about the participants' understanding of news, attitudes towards news consumption, and news consumption motivations. The subsequent ethnographic and diary studies examined the participants' news consumption in real-time: the ethnographic study recorded the participants' interactions on news topics on social media platforms. During the diary study, the participants documented their news consumption using pictures, texts, and predefined keywords. This procedure provided insights into online- and offline news consumption, as the participants also documented newspaper articles read, television broadcasts watched, and radio broadcasts listened. The diary entries were validated with interviews and recordings of cell phone usage time.

The triangulation of the data from all research steps shows that young people's news consumption can be systematized according to four dimensions: duration and times of consumption, news habits and behavior, restrictions, and media literacy. These dimensions vary according to the young people's age, but the boundaries are fluid.

12 to 14 years: This group accesses news primarily via smartphone, which they usually use at home, where Internet access via WLAN is available. The usage time of the smartphone is 2 to 3 hours a day. The use of smartphones, and thus the news consumption of young people, is strongly regulated by parents and school. These restrictions mean that young people hardly ever use online news services. They come into contact with news mainly through media available at home. The primary motivation for news consumption in this age group is the opportunity to talk to parents or at school about news content. Reading news articles is not easy for this age group; the young people need help from parents and teachers.

15 to 17 years: At this age, the parental influence and restrictions decrease, while the influence of peers increases. Adolescents in this age group spend a lot of time on social media platforms where they follow numerous channels and come into contact with news. Wildly popular are Instagram and YouTube. The news is hardly selected; these people consume whatever is accessible. Despite their understanding of rather complex news items, they prefer shorter and easily understandable information units. As soon as young people have a data package, they are almost always online and use their phones up to 6 hours a day, mainly on weekends, vacations, or when commuting on public transport.

18 to 20 years: At this age, the news consumption behavior is stabilizing, and individual patterns are emerging — young people in this age group access news via selected apps and social media channels. News is usually consumed in the morning during a commute, on the way home, and shortly before bedtime. The daily phone usage time is 3 to 4 hours. The interests and motivations for news consumption become more specific. Young people at this age want to understand what is going on, so they can share their knowledge and opinions with peers from special interest groups. Additional language skills enable them to consume news from foreign news providers. Also, young people in this age group critically reflect on their news consumption.

The results across all three age groups show that young people prefer visual formats such as pictures and videos. When scrolling on social media platforms, they often come across news content by chance. Memes and Instagram stories are particularly popular in this context. They often motivate the young people to trace back the content and find the original news source. Furthermore, specific news apps are used as news distribution channels.

In general, young people want the news to be less negative. They also feel overwhelmed by the large amount of news they are exposed to on a regular basis. They wish for news apps where news items can be selected according to predefined criteria and where they get a summary of the most important topics, illustrated with pictures and short videos. The main motivations for news consumption are passing the time, entertainment, personal interests, and discussing news topics with others. Young people want to be informed to have a say in current, critical issues and topics that are "in vogue."

The study resulted in an audience model with personas that depicts and systematizes young Swiss people's news consumption patterns. The model shows that the chance to reach young people with new news formats exists above all in the group of 15 to 17-year-olds. This age group has not yet developed a routine for its news consumption and is very receptive to new news formats.

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1 Introduction

Informed citizens are one of the key elements of democracy. Being an informed citizen includes keeping up to date on local, national, and international issues. Mass media and broadcasting provide us with information about what is going on in society, in politics, and in the world. They make an essential contribution to shaping public opinion, thus promoting the democratic participation of citizens. However, broadcasters are increasingly faced with the problem that they can no longer reach younger audiences. In Switzerland, almost one third of Swiss youth have little or no interest in news (Waller et al. 2019, p. 2). According to the Yearbook 2020 *The Quality of the Media* (fög 2020, p. 5), the group of the so-called news deprived¹ went up from 21% to 37% between 2009 and 2020. The share of news deprived is pretty high, particularly in the age group of young adults (54.6%). This is in accordance with the results of the JAMES focus study (Waller et al. 2019), which suggest daily world events are of secondary importance for about one third of those surveyed; this group rarely uses news sources, and, therefore, develops limited literacy in dealing with news, which in turn makes this group more vulnerable to disinformation. The EU Kids Online Switzerland study (Hermida 2019) showed that popular activities online for 13- to 16-year-olds are listening to music, watching videos, and socializing with friends and family via social networks and other platforms. Even though 99% of young people between 12 and 19 have their own smartphone and thus Internet access (Jugend und Medien, 2020) and even though they spend an average of four hours online every day (Heeg & Steiner 2019, p. 7), they consume very little news or no news at all. Closely linked to the fact of little news consumption is the question of the media literacy of younger audiences: whether and how young people recognize how they can check the facts that news is based on, who is behind the production of the news, how such a process works, how they gain access to news and to what extent they can reflect on and classify their news consumption behavior.

Today, news providers must meet different requirements than traditional media once had to. The challenge news providers face is to create content that attracts the attention of younger audiences (Galan et al. 2019). New media formats need to anticipate technological and social developments as well as the news behavior of young people, especially their news consumption via smartphones and on social media platforms. Several platforms and news formats (e.g., Venty, Bento, ze.tt, Izzy) which designed special content to address younger people did not succeed in reaching their target group and disappeared within a short time or were relaunched.

¹ News-deprived are defined as people "who use news media clearly below average (compared to all other user groups) and who are thus at a higher risk of being undersupplied with news" (fög 2020, p. 5).

Recent studies on the news behavior of young people have shown that smartphones are the most important devices for accessing news and information (Waller et al. 2019; Galan et al. 2019; Weichert & Kramp 2017), whereas traditional formats such as newspapers have become unattractive (Bengtsson & Johansson 2020, p. 1). Apps and platforms such as WhatsApp, YouTube and Instagram are among the ten most used applications by young people, and visual formats are particularly popular. Consequently, a news culture for younger audiences must be different from a traditional culture in terms of platforms, formats, modes, topics, and language.

The main question that arises in this context is: How can broadcasters and news providers motivate young people to become interested in news? The study *Reaching Swiss Digital Natives with News* provides answers to this question by empirically investigating the demands and expectations of young people aged 12 to 20 regarding news, their media behavior and activities associated with news consumption, and their media literacy. The overall aim is firstly to gain insight into what young people understand by news and how they consume news, and secondly, based on these insights, to develop a new audience model that takes into account the media consumption and news behavior of young people.

Furthermore, the study takes into account Switzerland's multilingual nature. As a main result, the study presents an audience model with personas that depicts and systematizes young Swiss people's news consumption patterns. The study was conducted from August 2019 to February 2020 by the IAM Institute for Applied Media Studies at the ZHAW Zurich University of Applied Sciences in collaboration with the Universities of Lugano (USI) and Lausanne (UNIL). It was funded by the OFCOM. The present report gives a short overview of related research studies and literature (Section 2), explains the research design (Section 3), and summarizes the main findings of the study (Section 4). It then presents the audience model with personas (Sections 5 and 6) and takes a closer look at the region-specific trends (Section 7). The report ends with a conclusion (Section 8), which reflects on the opportunities to reach young people with news.

2 Related Research: What We Already Know

In recent years, several mainly quantitative research studies have been conducted regarding media habits and behavior as well as the news consumption of young people. Relevant studies regarding media and young Swiss people the James focus study 2019 (Waller et al. 2019), the Credit Suisse Youth Barometer (gfs.bern 2018)), and the Yearbook 2020 *The Quality of the Media* (fög 2020). The study by the fög revealed that young people are only interested in news when the news offers opportunities for identification and when the news is discussed in their community or recommended by friends or influencers. Furthermore, young people no longer feel connected to specific media brands, but use various sources on social media (fög 2020, p. 7 ff). The fög study also includes a qualitative study with a small sample of 19 Swiss people between 20 and 25 years old. One result the researchers reported is that young adults consume news by chance, via the social media platforms on their smartphones, so news is seen as "an incidental by-product of their social media use" (fög 2020, p 7). Further studies in this field are about the relevance of the public service regarding the media consumption of young people aged 14 to 35 (Autenrieth, Künzler, & Neumann-Braun 2019) and the media report *Always on* by the Eidgenössische Kommission für Kinder- und Jugendfragen (Heeg & Steiner 2019).

As for the topics, more than three-quarters of 14- to 19-year-olds are interested in "entertainment and humor", "travel", and "sport"; in contrast, less than half of the young people are interested in political topics. At 46%, interest is still highest in local political topics (Waller et al. 2019, p. 3). The research results of the JAMES focus study of 2019, on the other hand, name "music" with 67% and "current events in the world" with 66% as the most important topics among young people (Waller et al. 2019, p. 11). With increasing age, interest in current world events increases (Waller et al. 2019, p. 11). The JAMES focus study also measures where young people are informed about world affairs. Most often they obtain their knowledge about it in personal conversations with friends and family (Waller et al. 2019, p. 12). This is followed by digital channels as a source of information, above all contributions on social networks, video portals or search engines. The classic electronic media (TV and radio) are only fifth and sixth. Free news apps are becoming more popular as a news source as young people grow older. The study distinguishes between three segments for source use: The "news deprived" (around 30%) with a reduced interest in daily news, the "socially and new media oriented" (36%), for whom mainly personal conversations, the Internet and social networks serve as sources of information, and the "classically mass media oriented" (34%), for whom editorially prepared media content is obtained via news apps, news portals, newspapers, radio or TV (Waller et al. 2019, p. 14f).

When it comes to how people access news, the smartphone takes first place (gfs Bern 2018, p. 67). In Switzerland, 98% of young people have a smartphone and thus constant Internet access (IGEM 2018, p. 1). The 16- to 25-year-olds spend an average of four hours online every day (Heeg & Steiner 2019, p. 7). In their online activities, young people attach particularly high importance to the aspects "being in touch", "seeking professional/school information" and "fun and entertainment", followed by "information on leisure and social topics", including information on politics and culture (Heeg & Steiner 2019, p. 10).

The EU Kids Online Switzerland study (Hermida 2019, p. 50) examines the behavior of children and young people on the internet. According to the study, the most popular activities online for 13- to 16-year-olds are listening to music, watching videos and socializing with friends and family via social networks and other platforms. Searching for messages comes in tenth place. More than half of this age group said they do this activity at least once a week. The high number of youths who stated that they never do participatory activities is striking. Only a small proportion of young people put their own content online at least once a week, participate in political or social discussions or in campaigns and petitions.

Among the platforms, young people prioritize messenger chats, first and foremost WhatsApp, followed by social networks, of which Instagram is most popular (Heeg & Steiner 2019, p. 8). Of the 15- to 24-year-olds, 80% are users of this network platform; the majority use Instagram several times a day (IGEM 2019, p. 1). This is followed by Snapchat, Facebook and Musical.ly, which today runs under the name Tiktok. Tiktok is especially popular among the youngest, while Facebook is still used more by the older ones. In terms of Facebook usage, however, there has been a marked, steady decline among young people for several years. Only 36% of 15- to 24-year-olds still use the platform "at least occasionally" (IGEM 2019, p. 1). Most young people use e-mail and video portals like YouTube several times a day. Information sites and streaming services for films are used by most of them several times a week (Heeg & Steiner 2019, p. 8). The streaming services Spotify and Netflix are very popular: about 60% use them "from time to time". Radio is still listened to by three-quarters of the Swiss population under 25 years of age; almost half of them do so daily (Heeg & Steiner 2019, p. 8).

Looking abroad, the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (Galan et al., 2019) conducted a qualitative study by analyzing the news consumption of 20 young people aged 18 to 35 years in the US and the UK. The researchers used digital tracking and diary studies as methods. They conclude that news brands and young people see the role and value of news differently: "Traditional news brands see news as: what you should know. Young audiences see news as: what you should know (to an extent), but also what is useful to know, what is interesting to know, and what is fun to know." (Galan et al. 2019, p. 4). A

qualitative study on the media use of adolescents and young adults in Germany (Kramp & Weichert 2017, p. 10) has shown that young people value professional journalism as a news provider. However, the conventional media formats of the traditional journalistic media fail to reach young people. "[I]n order to reach these target groups at all, news must be told, prepared and distributed differently" (Kramp & Weichert 2017, p. 11). A study of the news literacy of young people in the Netherlands (12- to 16-year-olds) suggests that the news consumption of young people is "predominantly passive, possibly due to a lack of intrinsic motivation" and that news is seen as "important, but often as boring, repetitive and negative, and disconnected from youth" (Tamboer, Kleeman, & Daalmans 2019, p. 1).

The cited studies often use the term "digital natives". This term was first used by the US-American author Marc Prensky to describe people born after 1980 (Moser 2019, p. 88). According to this definition, people who grew up with broadband Internet process information fundamentally differently than digital immigrants, i.e. those who only learned to use the Internet later in life (Prensky 2001, p. 1). Digital natives are known as media consumers who prefer to work in networks, prefer picture over text, interactive games over linear storytelling and who developed certain skills like accessing information quickly from an early age (Prensky 2001, p. 2). Moser (2008, p. 44) lists certain characteristics of digital natives such as the preference for multi-tasking, non-linear thinking, multimodal processing, collaborative work and mobile media use, which digital natives have in comparison to non-natives, the so-called digital immigrants. However, the term "digital natives" seems no longer precise in today's context. Young people today have all grown up with digital devices and are early adopters of news media as they develop, but this does not mean that all digital natives are tech-savvy, and many have deficiencies in media literacy. On the other hand, it is hard to identify any differences from non-native users in terms of usage behavior, and, therefore, no new generation – which the term "digital natives" suggests – has emerged. Although we still have the term "digital natives" in our project title, we are fully aware that the term has to be rethought (Evans & Robertson 2020).

3 Research Design

Most studies about the media and news consumption of young people in Switzerland are quantitative. In contrast, the study presented here is based on a qualitative multi-method approach. It differs from other studies on media consumption among young people in that it uses interviews, focus groups, ethnographic studies, and diary studies in order to investigate the news consumption and behavior of young people between 12 and 20 years old. The data

was collected in three Swiss language regions: German-, French-, and Italian-speaking Switzerland.

The overall aim is to gain insight into what young people understand by news and how they consume news. The research objectives related to this aim were to investigate:

- (i) the needs and expectations of young people regarding news services: What are young people's demands and expectations of news and news services and what do they understand by news?
- (ii) the media behavior related to news consumption: What is their news behavior and what are their activities related to the use of news?
- (iii) their media literacy when dealing with news: What competences do they possess to use news in a constructive way?

Based on the findings from the study, an audience model with personas was developed that takes into account the current media behavior and news consumption of young people. Personas are hypothetical archetypes of the actual users and as such a mental design tool to represent the target group(s) for the purpose of developing products and services. Creating personas helps news providers to better understand the needs, behavior, and expectations of the target group (Cooper 1999). Since, from the very beginning, the project aimed at designing a new audience model, a strong focus was placed on understanding the different age groups in terms of news consumption. Therefore, the persona concept seemed to be more appropriate than the repertoire-oriented approach (Hasebrink & Domeyer 2012), even though the audience model with the personas includes both components of media repertoires (patterns of behavior and media practices) and the perspectives on social domains (communicative contexts).

During the study, the following research questions were examined:

News habits and behavior: When and for how long do they consume news? Through which channels do young people encounter news? What topics do young people address when selecting news? What are the sources of news for young people? What news formats do young people consume? In which settings do young people consume news? What reasons do young people give for their news consumption? What is the motivation of young people to consume news?

Reflection on news consumption: How do young people assess their own media and news consumption? Do young people's assessments correspond to their actual usage behavior? Have young people changed their news consumption during the study? In what way? How do young people judge the content of the news they consume? How do young people judge

the style of the news they consume? What role do feelings play in news consumption? How do young people judge the relevance of the news they consume?

To answer the research questions, a mixed-method design was applied which will be described in the following sections.

3.1 Methodology

The study combined a set of methods starting with pre-interviews and focus groups and followed by two phases of ethnography, diary studies and retrospective interviews. As a last step, the various data sets were triangulated (Figure 1).

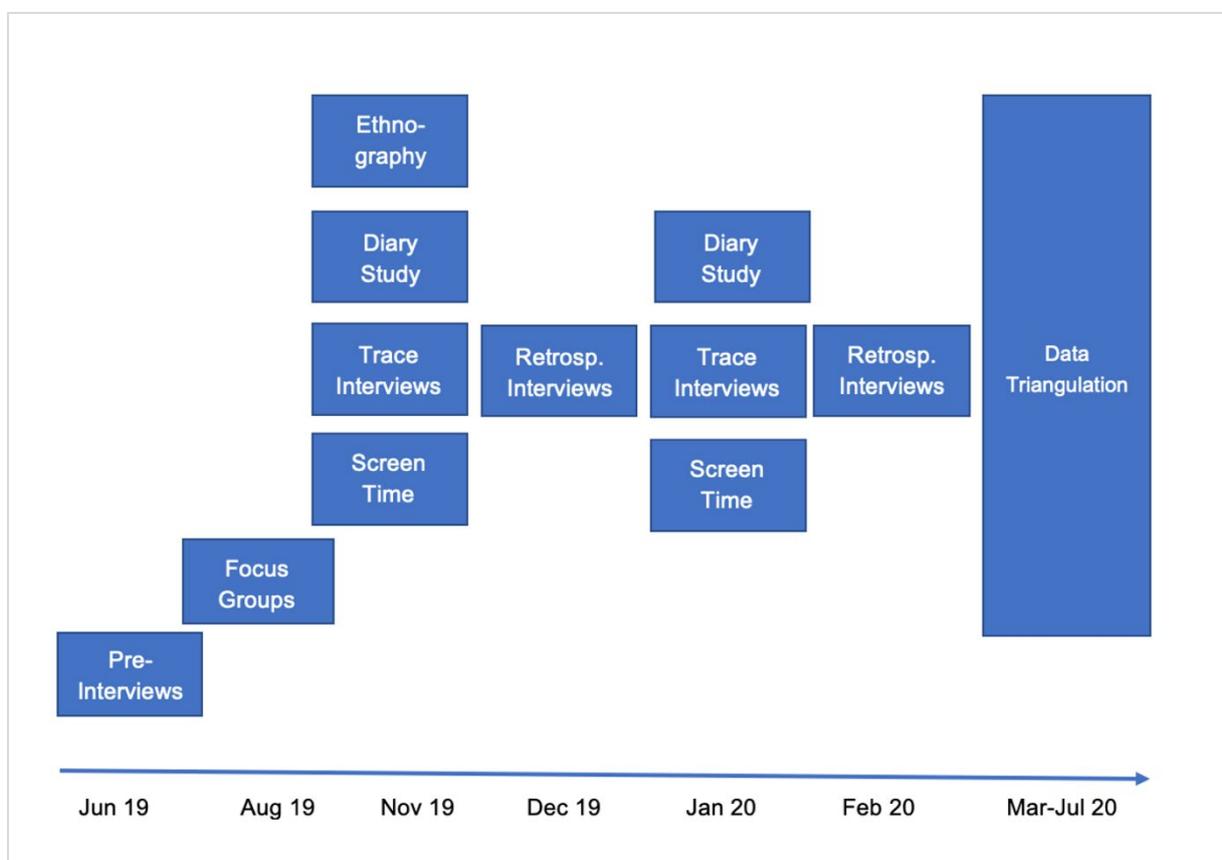


Figure 1: Overview of the research steps and methods of the study

Pre-interviews: In the preparatory work, pre-interviews were carried out and evaluated in the three language regions: 5 in German-speaking Switzerland, 4 in French-speaking Switzerland, and 2 in Ticino. The objective of the pre-interviews was to determine the topics for discussions in the focus groups.

Focus groups: In order to gain insight into the news behavior and news consumption of young people, a total of 10 focus group discussions were conducted: 4 groups in German-speaking Switzerland, 2 groups in French-speaking Switzerland, and 4 groups in Ticino. When putting together the focus groups, the age and the cultural, family, and educational backgrounds of the young people were taken into consideration. In order to better meet the age-specific requirements, the participants were divided into two age groups of 4-7 people per language region: Group 1: 12-15 years; Group 2: 16-20 years. Subsequently, six young people who belonged to different age groups and represented different social backgrounds in each of three language regions were selected from the previous participants. Additionally, new participants were recruited to avoid a possible bias caused by the pre-interviews and focus groups, as individual participants had already been confronted with news products and formats which they had not been familiar with before and they reported to us that new news sources had opened up as a result of this exchange. Furthermore, attention was paid to ensure that both genders were equally represented in both age groups. In preparation for the focus groups, news formats that address young people in Switzerland and Germany as well as international news formats in English were reviewed (e.g., izzy, Venty, BuzzFeed, Watson, Funk, Noizz, NowThisNews). In the focus group discussion, the young people were asked the following question: "What comes to your mind when you hear the word "news"?" Furthermore, various picture cards related to news were presented to get an overview of the familiarity with different sources, providers and formats. Each participant was asked to pick one picture card and to tell the others what comes into his/her mind.

Diary study (Evernote), trace Interviews, retrospective interviews: In the subsequent phases of the research project, the actual news consumption and news reception of at least six young people in each language region (11 in German-speaking Switzerland, 6 in French-speaking Switzerland, and 9 in Ticino) were recorded in media diaries and validated with interviews. Half of these participants were observed on social media (see ethnographic study) during this study, the other half not. The aim was to gain insight into the natural media behavior of the participants. That is why they were not given specific tasks. The young people documented their news behavior in standardized Evernote media diaries (verbal and visual) with their smartphone. There was no specification of what falls under the category of news. The participants were asked to document everything that they themselves consider news in the diary. The definition of news was therefore left to the young people themselves in order to gain a better understanding of what they understand by news. A diary study is an empirical method with which data is collected "in real time" regarding the behavior of a subject in his/her "natural" environment (Shiffmann et al. 2008). Individual moments or events according to a predefined task are documented. Most young people carry their mobile phone with them all day, which makes it an ideal instrument for collecting diary data

(Kuntsche & Labhart 2013). Apart from the option of recording notes, smartphones also offer photo and film functions with time tagging as well as the opportunity "to incorporate prompt queries through mail, chat, blog and messenger services" (Fuhs 2014, p. 268). "In this context, the news diary seems to be a good method for collecting both objective usage data and subjective forms of appropriation and the relevant life context." (Fuhs 2014, p. 260) Tracking the App usage on the participants' smartphones and looking at their diary entries enabled the researchers to keep track of the young people's news consumption.

The trace interviews were used to contact each participant once during the study to ask specific questions about peculiarities in their news consumption (new source, new channel, new format, new content). For example, when a participant installed a new News App on the phone or showed atypical usage behavior, trace interviews made it possible to identify certain patterns to generate deeper insight and to understand the actions of the participants better.

Retrospective interviews as a reflexive practice (Budach 2012) were used to better understand why the participants responded or behaved the way they did. Even though "this type of interview does not elicit the most accurate data" (Fetterman 2009, p. 555), the retrospective approach enables us to include the participants' perspective – what they told us in their diaries and what they did not – thus enriching the research data.

Ethnographic study: The proposed method, discourse-centered online ethnography, combines linguistic analysis and ethnography: The interactions of young people around news were to be recorded, categorized, analyzed with linguistic methods, evaluated and validated by means of trace interviews (Androutsopoulos, 2008; Latzko-Toth, Bonneau & Millette, 2016). The participants for ethnographic and diary studies were chosen in such a way that both genders were represented, and the participants had different socio-economic backgrounds. We also recruited new participants. The platforms for ethnographic observation were selected together with the participants. The online activities (mobile phone and social news platforms) of three young people per language region were systematically observed. The focus was set on news consumption and the interactions and discourses related to it. When the news behavior of a participant seemed unusual, the participant was contacted as soon as possible via Zoom for a trace interview to answer questions regarding their last diary entries. It turned out that none of the participants interacted with other young people in the context of their news consumption. For this reason, instead of a second ethnographic study, a second diary study was conducted with new participants, whose mobile phone data was recorded with the help of "Screentime". In this way, a possible use could be recorded via the mobile phone data and validated with trace interviews and/or in a retrospective interview.

Quantitative data (Screentime): The software Screentime was installed on all mobile phones of the study participants; in some cases, it was already installed by default (Apple operating systems). The participants received instructions concerning the use of the tool and their task to send the overview of their mobile phone usage, which is automatically recorded by Screentime, to the study leaders every day (Apple operating systems). For those participants who did not have an Apple operating system, the study leaders were able to call up the data themselves daily via a program. Data protection and the tasks/activities they were expected to carry out via the smartphone played a major role. All young people were informed about the data recorded and all participants as well as the parents of the non-volunteers had to sign a declaration of consent, stating where and how the data would be stored.

3.2 Sampling Procedure

The sample of the study had to be balanced between males and females. Furthermore, geographical and age characteristics, social and economic background, family type, and social origin were considered in the composition of the desired sample (Figure 2). To obtain a sample with these specific characteristics, the research team in the Italian-speaking area used different tools and methods for contacting potential participants: direct personal contacts, indirect personal contacts, and recruitment through open calls published online within specific sites and groups. These tools and methods were different, depending on the age of the participant. The younger the boy/girl was, e.g., 12-14 years old, the more communication was carried on indirectly through parents or relatives using phone calls or WhatsApp messages, when personal contact was made available. In some cases, messages for recruitment were posted within open groups of parents on Facebook and closed groups on WhatsApp, when available for contact. For older boys and girls – from 14 years old onwards – the contact was mostly made via WhatsApp, but also using Instagram's direct messages or by asking other participants to alert friends and relatives about the research, thus using the recruitment methodology called "snowball sampling".

In the French-speaking area, the contact was made through personal relations and personal tutors: neighbors of the project manager who have children, friends of theirs, and students of the network of personal tutors. Thus, a great variety of educational levels in public as well as private schools could be tested in a variety of neighborhoods in Swiss Romande. An advantage was that the parents of the students could directly and easily be contacted and information about the project was fully displayed to them. As a snowball effect, the parents talked about the project with other parents, as did the students with their peers.

In the German-speaking part of Switzerland, a call was made via social media channels (ZHAW and private) as well as via WhatsApp (Corporate contacts and private). In addition,

all upper secondary schools and technical colleges in the Winterthur area were contacted as well as several online platforms for young people, pastors and social workers in the Zurich area. Furthermore, the participating young people and their parents informed their own networks about the study.

Number of participants	ZHAW (D)	UNIL (F)	USI (I)	Total
Total participants	26	15	25	66
Pre-Interviews	5	4	2	11
Focus-Groups	19	12	24	55
Diary Studies	11	6	9	26
Ethnography	3	4	6	13
Screentime	11	6	9	26
Retrospective Interviews	11	6	9	26
Trace Interviews	6	3	6	15

Figure 2: Sample of the participants of the study

In order to comply with the ethical principles of the universities involved in this project, all participants or their parents (in the case of the younger adolescents) had to sign a consent form that explained the relevant details of the study and the various steps (data collection, types of data, data storage, and data access, data anonymization). It was also made explicit that the participants could end their participation (if they wanted) without any justification. For each research stage, a monetary incentive for the participation was given to the participants.

4 Overall Findings

In the following sections, the overall findings from the study are summarized. This includes the main findings of the three language regions.

4.1 Definition of news

The findings suggest that young people understand by “news” everything that is currently happening in the world and that is important for their lives, i.e., information that is of personal use. Examples mentioned by the participants are public transport timetables or the weather forecast. The younger the participants are, the more open and inconsistent is their concept of news. The older they become, the more traditional news is considered.

4.2 Relevance and credibility

The group of participants aged 12 to 15 regards TV as more relevant than newspaper or online platforms. Information is relevant if it offers some benefit or helps increase their knowledge to perform better at school. They consider TV news to be very credible and of high quality because of the complex production process and the fact that not everybody gets the chance to work for a TV program. Consequently, YouTube and other social media are deemed to be less credible because anyone can publish there. They are more willing to believe news if the information matches their reality.

The group of participants aged 16 to 20 considers news in general as important and enlightening, but at the same time they are skeptical about certain news outlets. They want to know who produces the news, i.e., transparency is very important to them. They prefer personal reports because they consider them more credible than other news. Furthermore, they assume that news may have an impact on their everyday life (e.g., potential environmental risks in their region, political changes, global disasters, but also information about health care, education, or career possibilities).

Both age groups are familiar with the term “Fake News”. They are aware that not every piece of news that is disseminated, especially via social media, is based on facts and that Fake News consists of false information. Mostly they search for other sources on Google. While the younger participants tend to believe what the majority says, the older participants go a step further by comparing different sources and only believe the news when they can find high consistency between the different sources. The strategies of checking for Fake News are especially used when the information is connected to their own living world and could have an impact on them.

4.3 News content

The statements clearly show that younger people may feel overwhelmed and have negative feelings when they are confronted with bad news and they therefore wish for more "good news". Negative stories (e.g., about disaster or crime) are mostly avoided unless the topic is omnipresent in the media (e.g., Covid-19, climate change). The older they get, the more willing they are to consume negative news on issues like crime, disaster, accidents, and injustices.

The younger participants (12-17) mentioned that they sometimes try to read or watch news about politics but that they struggle to understand it. As one participant put it: "It is too complicated and therefore just frustrating." Nevertheless, they agree that politics is important. The participants of voting age (18-20) emphasized that they are interested in politics, but they wish they could understand it better in order to feel more competent when it comes to political decision-making.

The parents play a significant role regarding the selection of news content, especially for the younger participants. Some participants mentioned that parents and teachers share news which may be of relevance for their everyday life such as an article about the local gymnastic group. In contrast, the older age group is informed about these kinds of news items through posts on social media or shared links on WhatsApp groups as well as by peers or influencers, but less by educators.

4.4 News formats

More important than the topic, however, is the way the content is presented. Both age groups prefer visual formats, e.g., a video or pictures which summarize and illustrate the news. Therefore, memes on Social Media Platforms and YouTube videos get the most attention. Nevertheless, they usually only watch broadcasts on television when their parents ask them to join.

News articles are consumed if the article is entertaining or the news is linked to personal interests or related to their own living world. However, long and complicated articles tend to be avoided. Hence, short and condensed articles which summarize the most important facts get more attention. Since they prefer compact information, push-notification is very welcome, because it informs them briefly and leads to more information through one click on the smartphone. Radio and other audio formats are rather unpopular. The conversation among the participants made it clear that especially the younger age group prefers simple news formats which promise funny content and contain pictures.

4.5 Reasons for news consumption

One of the most frequently mentioned reasons for news consumption is “to pass time” and “entertainment”. News was mostly consumed on the way to school or work, indicating that the young participants use news providers on their phones to bridge waiting time. However, each of the participants also documented several times that they consumed news because it was useful for them, indicating the importance of the relationship to one's own life.

4.6 Being informed

Most of the participants found it very important to be informed. There were only few participants who showed little interest in being informed. Those who showed less interest in news media mentioned that they only care about things which concern them directly and that most news providers publish content which is not engaging.

Reasons for being informed are: to be able to take part in important discussions about current topics at school or with their peer-group; to be warned about possible threats (like storms or criminal activity which occur in the region); to keep up to date on certain topics which they are interested in.

4.7 Future of news

As for the future of news, participants believe that the print press will disappear, and only digital news will be of importance. The older participants shared their skepticism concerning the credibility of news in the future; according to them, it would be better to have professionals delivering news and to not allow everyone to write blogs or share video content. They fear an increasing impact of fake news.

Asked about their ideas and wishes for the media industry, they mentioned solutions like:

“We should have screens which provide us with relevant news through pictures, text and video on all public transportation so that we will be updated constantly.”

And they would like to read more “positive” news instead of bad news, which makes them sad:

“News providers should deliver more good news to balance all the bad news in the world. Otherwise only helplessness and depression will spread in society.”

Other wishes concerned topics like politics and economics or social topics in general. The participants mentioned that they are indeed interested in these topics and wish for a monthly online magazine or a regularly updated App which summarizes the most important current information in a comprehensible and easily accessible way, with pictures or short videos. The older participants also wish for more visual content (videos), which would attract their attention concerning important topics. Furthermore, the desire for programs by young people for young people was often expressed, as such programs might better correspond to their reality and cover the topics, they are interested in.

The younger participants want more personalized messages to help them navigate through the information overload and save time when searching for relevant information. They wish for apps which have the function to select certain topics so that they are only provided with news that reflects their mood and interests.

5 Audience Model

The triangulation of the data from all research steps shows that young people's news consumption can be systematized according to four dimensions: time (consumption times and duration), habits and behavior, restrictions, and media literacy.

As news is primarily accessed on mobile phones, knowing when and for how long young people access their phones is essential to reach them with news. The dimension "habits and behaviors" gives an insight into what news topics young people consume, why and how. The restrictions impacting the news consumption can be attributed to the influence of parents and peers as well as technology and language skills. The dimension "media literacy" includes reading and digital skills as well as the ability to understand and contextualise news contents.

The value of the four dimensions varies according to the young people's age. The individual participants' data revealed that the news consumption patterns of young people aged 15-17 does not fit the age groups assumed at the beginning of the study. Therefore, the Audience Model splits the young audience into three age groups, following the four dimensions of news consumption. It systematizes the news consumption patterns of the age groups, but also shows the fluidity between them.

AUDIENCE MODEL

	 12-14	 15-17	 18-20		
TIME	CONSUMPTION DURATION	2-3 h	5-6 h	3-4 h	"I read more (during the vacations) because I don't have much time for reading during school. During school time I usually only look at the push notifications and then I already know what it's all about." (Age 15)
	CONSUMPTION TIMES	before and after dinner, together with the family, vacations	time in public transport, evening, weekend, vacations	always-on, time in public transport, lunchtime, evening, breaks, weekend, vacations	
NEWS HABITS & BEHAVIOUR	TOPICS OF INTEREST	entertainment (games, animals, comics)	topics relevant to the peer group/region (COVID, climate); entertainment (sport, stars, crime, lifestyle)	personal interests, education, entertainment	"If Angela Merkel says something or Trump does something, I don't think it's that important because it has no direct influence on me." (Age 13 and 14)
	CONSUMPTION MOTIVATION	useful for the consumer, entertainment (emotional)	personal interest, connect with peers, entertainment (emotional, intellectual)	personal interest, education, entertainment (intellectual, emotional)	
	SOURCES / ACCESS PATH	TV, newspaper, radio, search engines via family and school	social media post (timeline and profiles) to link to news platform, news aggregators	news apps, social media profiles (targeted, self-selected)	"The first thing I would do is google the internet (to find news)." (Age 14)
	CONSUMPTION PATTERN	by-the-way-consuming	headline-hunting, swiping, following up push notifications, search backward behaviour (meme)	extensive, deep and time-consuming engaging with specific content	"I have my two apps, Blick and Snap(chat). And they are very important for my news consumption." (Age 20)
	SHARING MOTIVES	connecting with family	phatic communication	connecting with special interest groups	"Because there they usually talk after school after the vacations about topics that are going viral, such as the climate strike." (Age 14)
RESTRICTIONS	GATEKEEPER	family recommend news articles	peers via special interest groups	the individual him-/herself	"I really don't remember which language it is. So I couldn't tell afterwards if an article was in German or English." (Age 18)
	NEWS OFFER	dependent on the parental home (newspaper subscription, habits for watching "Tagesschau")	dependent on social media as the main distributor & on recommendations of peers	self-selected apps, main news app, main social media channel	
	TECHNOLOGY	type of mobile phone, access to data package (+size), parental restrictions	data package size, school restrictions (mobile phone free time)	device-independent, no restrictions	
LANGUAGE	mother tongue as starting point of news consumption	relevance of media content language declines	news content language is less important		
MEDIA LITERACY	READING SKILLS	attempted reading	complex content is understood	reflection on their own news consumption	"... the picture with St. Nicholas on the bicycle. I found that funny. I don't know what that is, but I thought it was funny with the bike" (Age 13)
	DIGITAL SKILLS	gaming, playful interaction	fast adaptation	targeted use	
	NEWS UNDERSTANDING	through family & school	through media socialization	self-reflection	

Figure 3: Audience Model. Design: Verena Lechner

5.1 News behavior patterns according to age groups

The group of 12- to 14-year-olds

This group accesses news primarily via smartphone, which they usually use at home where Internet access via WLAN is available. Therefore, the usage time of the smartphone is relatively short, 2 to 3 hours a day.

The parental influence is vital within this age group. Parents are the primary source of information about important global topics or regional events. The young people's main interests lie in entertainment; they prefer funny content like comics, games, or content about animals. Since they are too young to legally have social media profiles, their access to content depends on the formats available at home or accessible through their parents. That is why this age group still gets in touch with TV broadcasts, newspapers, and radio. They consume news by-the-way, in relatively short periods, without giving it too much thought. The primary motivation for news consumption in this age group is the opportunity to talk to parents or at school about news content and to connect with parents through conversations about news.

The use of smartphones, and thus the news consumption of young people, is strongly regulated by parents and school. These restrictions mean that young people hardly ever use online news services. However, parents not only restrict news consumption through phone use regulation, but they sometimes also push it by suggesting news articles for reading or asking their children to watch TV news broadcasts with them.

Most news articles are too complicated for the young people in this age group. When they encounter an exciting or entertaining headline, they attempt to read a news article but often give up after a few lines. They get frustrated when the reporting is too complicated for them. If they really want to understand something, they ask their parents or teachers for further explanation.

The group of 15- to 17-year-olds

Young people in this age group have their data package and are constantly online. They consume news content whenever they can, in free times like weekends, vacations, and when commuting by public transport. Even in school breaks, they look at push-notifications.

As the young people spend a lot of time on social media, they get information about current trends and consume news to connect with their peers. An essential motivation for news consumption is phatic communication, the possibility to engage in small talk and be part of a discussion, to interact socially and feel integrated. Young people in this age group follow countless social media channels where they also get in touch with news media accounts and

news contents. Since they want to cover many topics, their consumption is rather broad and diverse but not very deep. They swipe through feeds and hunt for headlines.

While the parental influence and restrictions decrease, peers' influence increases, and with it, the topics of interest shift. Peers set trends and give recommendations for social media channels and therefore strongly influence the news consumption behavior. Restrictions are mostly just set by the school e.g. through rules concerning the smartphone use during lectures.

Young people in this age group adapt very fast, and their understanding gets better due to the increased media socialization. They begin to understand more complex news content. However, they still prefer small bites of information, delivered by a meme or a short video, which helps them understand the critical information.

The group of 18- to 20-year-olds

At this age, the news consumption behavior is stabilizing, and individual patterns emerge. News is usually consumed at off-peak times: in the morning during a commute, on the way home, and shortly before bedtime. The daily phone usage time is 3 to 4 hours.

The interests and motivations for news consumption become more specific and personal; they are related to education or hobbies, and the influence of peers decreases. The news behavior is more targeted, as young people in this age group know which content they are interested in and where to get it. Therefore, the access paths are specific. Young people in this age group settle for individual news formats and providers. They tend to use one or two pre-eminent news distributor apps and one or two social media platforms. There, they follow fewer accounts than the middle age group. An essential motivation for news consumption is the ability to share knowledge and opinions with special interest groups. Nevertheless, the news is also consumed for entertainment, or to pass the time and to relax.

The restrictions concerning news consumption become less, as there are no more rules from parents or school. Also, access to news content becomes broader. The selection of news offers seems to be related to knowing different languages. Becoming more fluent in English opens up the opportunity to consume more diverse news content. Some participants did not even remember if they consumed news in their first language or English. Therefore, the oldest participants are not dependent on Swiss news providers anymore,

Young people in this age group take their time to read or watch news completely and reflect on the content to fully understand it. The news contents are digested, and the newly acquired knowledge is implemented when needed.

5.2 Window of opportunity for reaching young people with news

The Audience Model shows that the chance to reach young people with new news formats exists above all in the group of 15- to 17-year-olds. Parents and school strongly restrict the younger age group; the older age group has already developed habits and use patterns in relation to news consumption. 15- to 17-year-olds have not yet developed a news consumption routine and are very receptive to different news formats.

15- to 17-year-olds state that it is essential to be informed about world events and to be able to form an opinion. Their attitude towards news is rather optimistic, especially if the content has personal relevance, a regional impact, or entertainment for them and their peers. News is considered to be useful for school purposes and helpful in daily life. The young people want to be informed to be able to take part in discussions at school or connect with peers. They access news primarily on their phones via social media feeds. If they install specific apps to be informed, the choice depends strongly on current personal interests.

The news consumption is driven by social media, because it is “the easiest access to news”. Scrolling through social media content is one of the most time-consuming activities in this age group. Content found on social media, like memes or specific posts, is used as a starting point for accessing different online news media. Traditional news formats are mostly ignored. Additionally, the young people’s attention is caught by push-notifications which direct them to influencer channels, social media posts shared by friends on messenger apps, and topic-specific chat groups.

The preferred news distributors on a national level are Instagram, YouTube and several news apps. Therefore, news consumption is based on availability. This age group does not actively search for specific news but consumes whatever is visible in their feeds or suggested through push notifications. Apps are selected on the basis of personal interests, e.g. football fans install apps providing constant updates on football news.

The illustration below (Figure 4) shows the window of opportunity for reaching this age group with the news. Demographic factors cannot be influenced, although they play an essential role in news consumption. However, the characteristics of the four dimensions of the audience model (consumption times and duration, habits and behavior, restrictions, and media literacy) in relation to the structural environment offer an “entry gate” for media providers.

The best time to reach 15- to 17-year-olds is when they are experiencing changes in their daily routines. These are the times when they become interested in new topics and are most open to trying out new channels, providers, products or formats and incorporating them into their news consumption routine. Examples of such changes are: moving house, changing

school or starting an apprenticeship. In times of disruption, the young people meet new friends, get in touch with new topics, develop new interests and learn new languages. Furthermore, new daily routines lead to different news behavior: the change from walking to using public transport for a commute, for example, opens up more time resources for news consumption. The changes do not always have to be radical. The participant data shows that even small changes in everyday routines - such as holidays or examination periods - can lead to big changes in news consumption.

A large number of the changes in the living and social environment are predictable, as they are linked to age and school calendars. Together with the four dimensions of the Audience Model, they offer a window of opportunity for reaching young people with news.

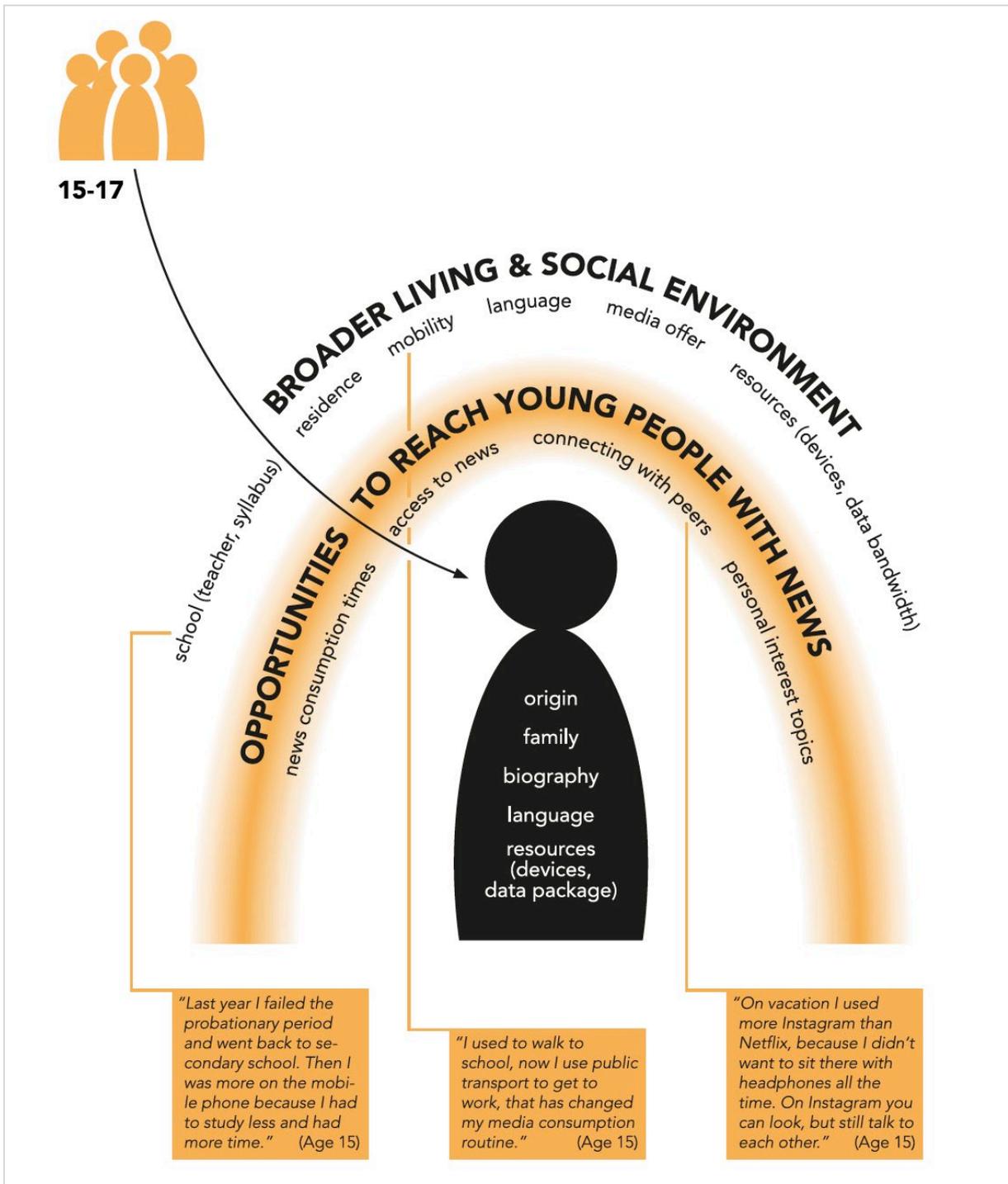


Figure 4: Opportunities to reach 15- to 17-year-olds with news. Design: Verena Lechner

6 Swiss Personas

The results of the study were not only systemized with the audience model, but also translated into personas, detailed archetypal descriptions of typical members of a target group. The news consumption of the personas is systemized in three dimensions: attitude towards news, motivation for news consumption and news consumption patterns.

While personas are fictional, they can be used to make real the information needs and news consumption habits of potential audiences, as the concept underscores the value of bringing consumer-first thinking to newsroom teams.

The four personas below are based on data from all three language regions and are therefore called “Super Personas” (Figures 5 to 8). Each persona is designed to be gender-neutral, as there were no significant differences between male and female study participants. The pronouns he/she are therefore used randomly.

Superpersona 1

Biography:

Name: Alex
Gender: neutral
Age: 13

Background: Lives in a middle-class family with one sibling and divorced parents.

Education: Goes to secondary school.

Photo:



Behavior in terms of news consumption:

News media consumption is generally regulated by family. It depends on access (phone with/without data package), and parental environment (subscribed newspaper). Parents/teachers act as gatekeepers for news and regulate the news media behavior.

Consumes only “delivered” news by parents/school and/or aggregators (phone), or when a medium is literally just under their nose (newspaper, TV). Therefore, news sources are randomly chosen based on the availability at home/school. Social Media is not used at all, and not seen as a news distributor.

News is hard to understand without further explanations. Consumption without help is seldom, brief, and mostly by the way (headline and image driven news consumption). Therefore, the consumed content is totally random, and is not reflected on.

Motivation for news consumption:

Led by parents/school or to overcome boredom. Gatekeepers try to influence the news media consumption, which happens with limited success.

The motivation to search for news must be triggered by personal interests like gaming/funny content (animals, comics).

Attitude towards news:

All new information is considered to be news (open definition). Only consumes news that is relevant in the personal daily life (gaming, public transport, weather forecast). Classic news is not yet considered relevant.

Figure 5: Superpersona 1

Superpersona 2

Biography:

Name: Robin
Gender: neutral
Age: 15

Background: lives in a lower-class family with parents and two siblings.

Education: Goes to Gymnasium and struggles with it, is therefore unsure whether to stay or to change to secondary school.

Photo:



Behavior in terms of news consumption:

Accesses news via social media where most of the preferred news is found, while scrolling the “news feed” (especially scrolling Instagram stories, YouTube channels). Some content gets more attention than others depending on the visualization (aesthetic factors). Influencers play an important role in bringing attention to certain news and specific topics for youngsters (LGBTQ community, climate debates, etc.). Accesses news also through specific sites addressing young people (Kapaw.ch, Watson, RSI “Spam”). Memes are used as information source even though they are not always considered to be a news format. Retraces the original news in order to better understand the meme. Consumes local news and sensational news because these news items are useful for daily life and enable them to chat. Doesn’t consume traditional news media formats.

Motivation for news consumption:

The main motivation is personal and internally driven (entertainment/passing time, connect with friends and family), but school demands can be important too.

Attitude towards news:

Everything is considered news. Expertise of community members and influencers is seen as relevant and used as an alternative source to professional journalism.

Figure 6: Superpersona 2

Superpersona 3

Biography:

Name: Luca
Gender: neutral
Age: 16

Background: Lives in a middle class, classic family with both parents and one sibling.

Education: Goes to high school and wants to study at a college later.

Photo:



Behavior in terms of news consumption:

Consumes like “one world – two options”’: On the one hand, uses push notifications and news-media on social media platforms as a source, on the other hand several news Apps (20minutes, SRF sport, Blick.ch) and news-info on TV, radio, newspaper (traditional media). Usually consumes many different contents, jumping from social channel to social channel and from entertainment to news contents. Nevertheless, consumes news during specific times of the day, preferably in the morning and the evenings (on the way to school/home, passing time after dinner) even though gets news all day long. Interacts with news content on WhatsApp groups (driven by specific personal interest) or in direct conversations with friends and family. A lot of news circulates through informal channels such as direct messenger or physical word to mouth.

Motivation for news consumption:

Personal interest and to meet social demands are the driving factors to consume news. Is interested in current topics to be able to be part of a discussion. Wants to stay tuned, get informed and learn about society. Considers news also as a source of entertainment and fun.

Attitude towards news:

Has a classic news definition (being always up-to-date, interests, social environment). On the other hand, sees news as entertaining. News can be an important information source as well as an entertainment platform, which doesn't have to be contradictory.

Figure 7: Superpersona 3

Superpersona 4

Biography:

Name: Andrea
Gender: neutral
Age: 18

Background: Lives in a house with well-educated parents (high income) and a sibling who studies medicine.

Education: goes to university

Photo:



Behavior in terms of news consumption:

Consumes quality news, mainly digital, via public media providers (apps) or through social media (likes videos, pictures, memes), reads/watches news in depth, carefully and completely. A few main channels (a mix between news distributor Apps and social media platforms) are used as media sources.

Heavy and diverse news consumption (Swiss politics, big world themes, special knowledge for studies). Avoids “small and soft news” and Yellow Journalism. High reflection on news-media content to discuss it with peers. Nevertheless, news is used for killing time and entertainment, even though it is not directly useful.

News is also consumed during off-peak times and on the way to university/home.

Motivation for news consumption:

News is used to generate knowledge which helps to be an informed citizen and/or helps to master the studies.

News is also consumed to overcome boredom in free-time and to have access to personal-interest-related information.

Attitude towards news:

Classic news definition prevails (news is made by professional news makers/experts). Is aware of problems related to news (fake news, filter bubbles, quality of news). Knows that news sources must be chosen carefully.

Figure 8: Superpersona 4

7 Region-specific Trends

While the audience model and the super personas classify the study results for all three language regions, this section focuses on regional characteristics. Due to the small samples in the respective language regions, it is not possible to say conclusively how pronounced these trends are. However, they do provide a starting point for follow-up studies.

7.1 Italian-speaking region

Most participants in the Italian-speaking region reported consuming news about important issues everyone should be informed about, even if personal interest was also found to be an important driver for news consumption, together with the influence of parents and from school. News consumption usually happens at home or while commuting from home to school and vice versa; furthermore, consumption usually happens alone, but older participants tend to discuss the news more often with parents and friends.

Local news is the most common type consumed by participants from the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland, who also like to get news about the environment and climate change, which seems to be the specific topic that mostly gets their attention and interest. Other topics are usually related to the personal interests and preferences of each participant.

Videos and short texts such as those posted by the social media program from RSI “Spam” are the preferred formats because they give a concise idea of the context of the news, which can be deepened with longer videos and detailed articles if it is found to be interesting. This might be due to how participants reported consuming news: they do not usually look for specific news, rather they encounter it randomly and consume it without usually paying too much attention, often at home or while commuting. However, if the news can trigger their interest, they search for more information about the issue and consume news with curiosity and criticality. Nevertheless, they hardly ever interact with the news.

Hyper-tailored news consumption has also been found to be quite common, as participants like to get suggested content based on their previous readings and preferences from news aggregators such as Flipboard or their smartphone news feed.

Overall, participants from Ticino have been found to prefer RSI over other news providers because it is perceived as being very reliable; Corriere del Ticino is also one of the most liked providers, while Ticinonline is perceived as not being trustworthy – nevertheless, it is among the most common providers.

Instagram and YouTube are the most used social media, even if they are mostly used for entertainment and not for news, at least not consciously. Despite the growing diffusion of TikTok among young people, none of the participants from Ticino have reported using this

social media, at least at the time the study took place. While most participants reported not using social media to get news, their actual news consumption tracked in the diaries and discussed during retrospective interviews generally revealed that they get some news from social media as well, not only from accounts of traditional news providers but also from other accounts they follow based on their interests. The role of influencers to deliver news on topics the participants are interested in becomes crucial. People they follow on social media are considered trustworthy. The brief video format, where the news is explained by a trusted source, is the preferred one. Social media are reported as the places where news could reach everybody.

The same lack of alignment between self-declared and actual news consumption (i.e. news consumption assessed by them during the different phases of the project vs. news consumption that can be observed from the diary study) can be found in terms of providers and channels. In fact, most participants declared that their news consumption happens only through smartphones, digitally; nevertheless, the diary study allowed us to observe that several participants still consume traditional news, watching TV newscasts or reading newspapers, as well as listening to radio newscasts.

Among the most interesting trends found for Ticino, the usage of memes as sources of information was one of the less expected ones. Memes are usually thought of as entertaining content, not conveying useful information, and participants themselves usually excluded memes from their account of daily news consumption. It was only possible to learn about this trend during in-depth and trace interviews. This process happens in two steps: first, a meme is received by participants, usually in private online groups; then, if participants find the content of the meme to be interesting, they try to deepen their understanding of the topic, searching for the actual news which the meme refers to. Thus, this trend has been defined by the team as "two-step, search-backward" news consumption.

Participants reported that they have no direct interaction with news. They do not publicly comment, like or share. Some of them use news content to interact online or offline with friends and family. Therefore, news circulates through informal channels such as WhatsApp groups or offline word of mouth.

The mobile phone is so important to participants from Ticino because they feel it is more accessible than anything else, as they can use it to access news everywhere and at any time – especially when commuting from home to school and vice versa – and some of them feel that traditional media are not as accessible. Flexibility might also be the reason why most participants reported preferring formats such as short texts and videos, which have been described by some participants as less demanding and clearer, compared to other formats.

The mobile phone is so important to participants because they feel it gives them more access to information than any other medium.

Especially for older participants, it seems to be very difficult to differentiate between time spent online consuming entertainment and time spent online watching the news. For instance, when they are commuting, they usually consume many different contents, continuously shifting from social media channel to social media channel and from entertainment to news contents. Nevertheless, many of them reported consuming news during specific times of the day (e.g. on public transport, when Wi-Fi is available). News consumption has also been found to happen in a rather distracted fashion, which means while doing other activities. For instance, some participants have been found to be getting news while chatting with friends during an online session on videogames.

Parental influence has also been found to be prominent in the news consumption of Swiss Italians, especially of younger ones. In some cases, this influence is limited to habits in news consumption that participants unconsciously take from their parents (e.g. watching the evening newscast all together while/after having dinner or reading the newspaper since their family has a subscription to it and they can find it at home regularly); in a few – relevant – cases, parents purposely try to influence their children's news consumption, for instance cutting out news items from newspapers and giving them to their son/daughter to be read.

The unconscious influence of parents might also be the reason why in this region mixed consumption has been observed, namely, news consumption based on both traditional and online sources, where traditional news outlets (mainly, RSI and Corriere del Ticino) are often the only ones considered trustworthy.

7.2 French-speaking region

In the French-speaking region, the triangulation of the data led us to establish a clear convergent pattern with 4 values corresponding to the age groups. Thus, news consumption for Group A (12-15 years old) is based on the following typical characteristics:

- 1. Source* of news consumption is mainly social media and the preferred device is the smartphone. The young people rely on push notifications and the network of friends to get and consider news. Instagram, Snapchat and WhatsApp are preferred platforms or Apps. These young people don't consume traditional news (no television, radio, or newspapers).
- 2. Motivation* of news consumption is dominated and/or constrained first by specific school and/or parents' demands and second by personal interest.
- 3. Relation* to news is rather emotional: young people 'adhere' to what they hear, watch, see and respond in terms of affects. Reasoning and meta consideration about the news comes second.
- 4. What is at*

stake with news is often 'empirical'. Young people have practical purposes to achieve (e.g. knowing the bus/train timetable). This state of affairs is probably linked with an unclear definition of news (news is 'all that we learn about something').

As for the news consumption of Group B (16-19 years old), the same typical characteristics have other values

1. *Source of news* consumption is professional news makers, mainly public service, and the preferred device used for consumption is the smartphone. Actually, young people rely on the newsmakers they know and appreciate (e.g. RTS info). The official websites of professional newsmakers are preferred Apps. The young people also consume traditional news formats on a regular basis: newspaper, television, radio.

2. *Motivation* of news consumption is dominated by personal interest. More precisely, the participants are aware of being members of a community of citizens, and news is an essential resource to stay tuned to what is going on in the world. Participants of group B have a traditional definition of news: new elements of information about certain valuable topics reported by journalists (e.g. climate change issues). 3. *Relation* to news is rather intellectual: the participants are skilled in interpreting a message with 'distance' and are able to reflect and comment on it. In this sense, they are sensitive to style (e.g. irony) and genre variations (e.g. memes) within the domain of news. 4. *What is at stake with news* is often 'philosophical'. Their personal interest in acquiring knowledge in specific areas is dominant. The parents and/or school demands do not represent a relevant aspect or do not trigger their news consumption.

The overall results can be considered regional trends. However, two additional dimensions of news consumption should also be considered:

1. *Time and place of news consumption*: All the participants are going to school, which implies a specific relation to time and pass time constraints. All participants read push notifications on their smartphone before leaving home or on their way to school. Also, two out of six participants consume traditional news on their way (e.g. listening to a news bulletin in the car with their parents; reading the *20 minutes* newspaper in the bus). Another participant reads newspapers (subscribed to by the parents) when back home after school.

2. *Sharing practices and interaction about news*: None of the participants shares news content on a regular basis, either with friends or with their parents. More precisely, discussion and interaction about news is rare and represents a constraint (e.g. small talk with the parents during dinner; a talk to prepare for school). None of the participants declares that they are active in their network on social media: they all 'use' social media but they do not publicly 'produce' (e.g. no comments left on Twitter).

7.3 German-speaking region

Access and availability can be considered key factors for news consumption in the German-speaking region as the 12- to 14-year-olds are strongly limited in their access to news by their parents. The news consumption of the youngest depends, therefore, on accessibility and parental environment, which means that it is strongly affected by school or parents' news consumption behavior. One of the consequences is that they simply use what is available at home. This can be a subscribed-to or free newspaper, the Tagesschau, which is on TV after dinner, or the radio in the background. Their news consumption is therefore also only incidental and very superficial.

The situation is quite different for young people aged 15-17. Their access to devices, data, certain providers or products is no longer limited. Via their cell phone, they have "access to the whole world of news" - and they use it if the news is made accessible as easily as possible via the cell phone and preferably via social media. In this age group, we can describe the process of news finding as the "easiest available news source" on their mobile phone.

The oldest study participants no longer simply leave their news distribution to their cell phones or social media. They have chosen news apps based on their personal interests and use them as their main news source. Often these apps are flanked by a social media channel, which is intended to provide additional news access. Providers, channels, formats, content, and people the young people do not like are deliberately excluded (muted, unfriended, not used).

In the German-speaking region, the environment seems to have a strong impact on the pattern of how news is used. A driving factor for news consumption is interest based on the living worlds of the young people. This includes the interests of peers, current school topics, topics related to hobbies or regional issues that have an influence on the young people's daily lives.

Young people are confronted with drastic changes in their environment, whether it is the beginning of an apprenticeship, the change to high school or even the start of a course of study. This often involves new forms of commuting, a different workload, and the resulting changes in time resources as well as contact and access to new groups of people and media products. Young people quickly adapt their media behavior to the new situation and include new sources, products, and formats in their news repertoire. This means that individual media consumption behavior depends also on structural environmental influences (e.g. vacation vs. school, life changing events etc.). Another example of the environmental influence was described by a participant who had a change of commute. If he was traveling

by train, he consumed news on the way but as soon as he had a change of working place which was reachable by foot or bike, this news consumption habit stopped. Availability of time in general plays an important role in whether and for how long news is consumed. If, for example, vacations make it unnecessary to travel to school, news consumption drops significantly. Although the phone usage time was higher at the weekend and in the vacation than during the week, the news media consumption was less. This indicates that news media are mostly used during the week, integrated into daily routine.

Another trend observed in the German-speaking region is using news consumption for emotional self-regulation. Bad news triggers negative emotions while funny content or good news triggers positive emotions. In our sample, the emotional self-regulation was evident in different manifestations in different age groups. We discovered that the youngest study participants, aged between 12 and 14, specifically avoid negative news in order not to get scared or feel bad about it. The middle age group, aged 15-17, is already aware of the feelings that the consumption of news can trigger in them and knows which news can trigger positive and which negative feelings in them and others. This age group likes to share funny content with their peer group to spread good cheer. The oldest study participants (18-20) went one step further: they specifically consumed news content to regulate their mood. For example, they tended to soften topics on the weekend to get into an exuberant mood.

8 Conclusion

This study aimed to conduct an in-depth qualitative analysis of the news use of digital natives, including reception, perception, and interaction as a basis for an audience model that helps the media industry to reach digital natives and encourage them to participate in social and political discourses.

The qualitative multi-method approach allowed us to capture the news consumption from the participants' perspective, understand their perspective on the news, and develop the categories for each research step accordingly. Therefore, each step of the analysis was shaped according to the results from previous steps. The insights from the first diary study and retrospective protocols, for example, pointed towards the influence of holidays on news behavior. As a consequence, the second diary was timed in a way that allowed validation of those insights. Unlike quantitative analysis, the qualitative methodology of the study showed micro-details of news consumption invisible in big data: all steps of the research allowed us to see the habits of the young people through a lens, which enabled us then to question 'in interaction' with the participants the 'what, when, how and why' of their options in terms of news consumption, of news definition and of the particular awareness of their relation to

news. Furthermore, the qualitative approach made it possible to deepen the results of existing quantitative studies and understand individual study participants' particularities. Furthermore, the study design allowed us to identify aspects ignored in previous quantitative studies, e.g. the fact that older participants naturally consume English content, without even remembering that what they watched or read was in English. Another advantage of the qualitative approach was that it allowed us to recognize the lack of alignment between self-declared and actual news consumption. The majority of the participants were not aware of how much time they spent on their mobile phones and how many apps and platforms they used to consume news. Although most of the participants declared that their news consumption happens only through smartphones, the diary study showed that several participants still consume traditional news without being aware of it. The last point, in particular, shows the value of a qualitative approach compared to surveys only.

The study results show that young news consumers have a very broad and not clearly defined understanding of the term “news.” Their definition includes everything currently happening globally and essential or exciting for them or people close to them. Especially among the younger participants, every new piece of information shared with an audience on any channel or direct messenger is considered news. The participants would like less negative news and news about topics they can relate to due to their interests, topics relevant to school or everyday life experiences. In terms of formats, pictures and videos are preferred. Linked to this factor, it is also important to take into account the customization of delivery to effectively reach young people; this means, for instance, using influencers or people who are recognizable in a given region, but also sources of information considered to be close and reliable. Next, a central motivation for news consumption is to be informed on relevant topics, the ability to talk about the content at school or with family and peers, which is at the same time the preferred form of interaction around the news. Although the study participants hardly ever liked or shared the news on social media, they shared content through messaging apps like WhatsApp or discussed it offline. The news seems to spread through informal chats or offline word of mouth.

The entry gate for reaching young people with news is their smart phones. Young people encounter news content while scrolling in social media platforms, using news aggregator apps or push-notifications from chats with peers or special interest groups. News is mostly consumed by the way, driven by algorithmic suggestions on the platforms used. Access via non-news formats – mostly memes – is widespread and often leads to retracing the original news to better understand the meme (backward search). In general, online formats, such as websites or social media, seem to be crucial for reaching young people. The use of Instagram Stories to spread a simple screenshot of a news article has been proved to be

very effective, as well as the use of memes that have a connection to an official news story but which are perceived as funny and playful.

The chance to reach young people with new news formats exists above all in the group of 15- to 17-year-olds. The families strongly influence the news consumption of the youngest age group; the oldest age group has already developed habits and use patterns concerning news consumption. 15- to 17-year-olds have not yet developed a news consumption routine and are very receptive to different news formats. In order to reach that age group, media providers need to take into account their interests, the preferred channels and formats but, overall, also the influence of the structural environment. Especially transitions like change of school can serve as an entry point for establishing a new news consumption routine.

The access to the younger age group can be established through school and parents. The study has clearly shown that conversations about news lead to young people reflecting on and adapting their news consumption. There appears to be a lot of potential in this area.

The results from the language regions also show tendencies that could be further explored in follow-up studies.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to all the participants of the study. Without their cooperation and commitment, the study would not have been possible. We would also like to thank the OFCOM for funding this study.

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