

WHAT DOES IT MEAN WHEN PEOPLE SPEND **LESS TIME** ON NEWS?

Media Futures ●

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The audience metric of “time spent” is now a key parameter for measuring and understanding people’s engagement and loyalty online. With particularly young people spending less time on news, concerns have accordingly been raised for the future of journalism and public engagement. This study analyzes how audiences engage with news online, focusing on their experiences of quick user practices, which refer to fast, high-frequent, and scattered patterns of news use, such as scanning, scrolling, and checking.



RQ: WHAT DO QUICK NEWS USER PRACTICES MEAN FROM AN AUDIENCE PERSPECTIVE, AND HOW DO THEY RELATE TO MEANINGFUL USER EXPERIENCES?

METHOD



1. INTERVIEWS + VIDEO ETHNOGRAPHY:

Fourteen informants (30-65 years) were interviewed and later filmed while using their preferred news sites on their own smartphones to see how they interacted with news.

2. MEDIA DIARIES + DATA DONATIONS

In between interviews, informants were encouraged to write media diaries and donate their news browsing history to get insights into when they interacted with news and for how long.

3. FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEWS

Informants were interviewed again based on their diaries and data donations.

QUICK NEWS USER PRACTICES

- were characterized by skilled and efficient navigation – the informants were experienced users, and their quick but frequent news use attested to their proficiency and resourcefulness rather than disengagement.
- were used frequently and resulted in much time spent on news in total, despite individual sessions being short.
- were complimented by other platforms, devices, and strategies (both online and offline) for getting news.
- could provide reassurance and control, enabling social identity and interaction, which were experienced as meaningful news habits.
- could result from less intentional and more automated or embodied habits and could be experienced as time *lost* on news.

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I open the article and scroll 1-2-3 times, and the section I've then come to is usually the whole [essence of the] news article. That's what the headline is all about, really. You actually have to scroll that far.

— Informant, 30

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