

# How do Publishers feel about their CMS?

## Publisher considerations for selection, utilisation, and improvements

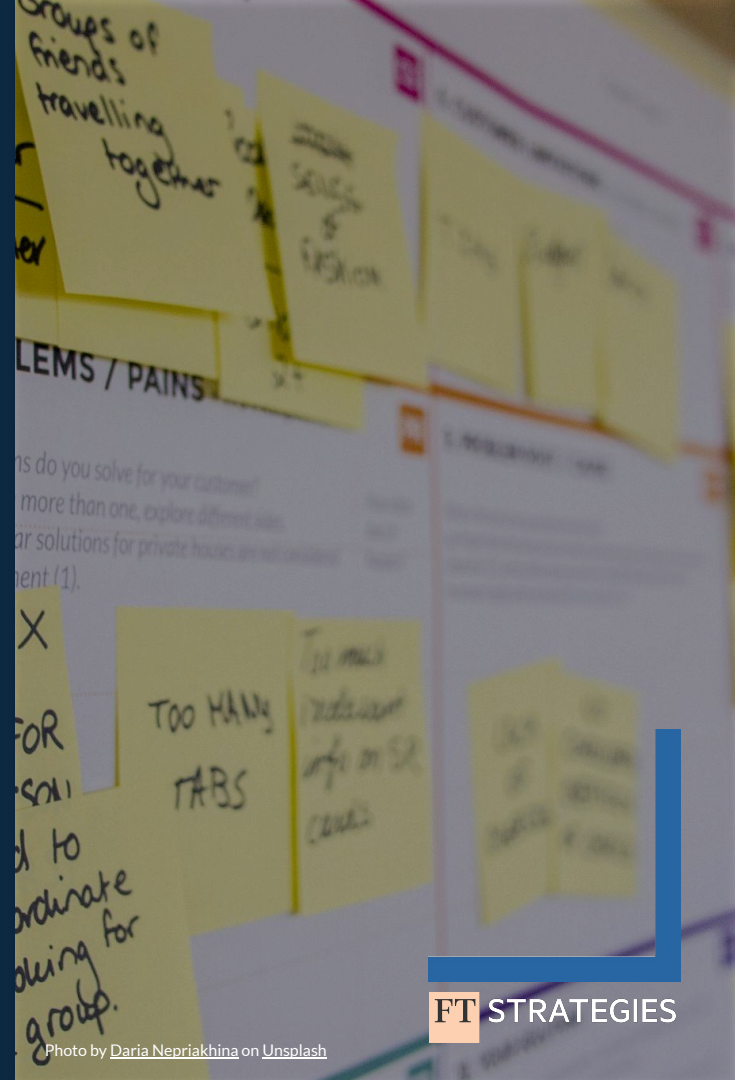
*A research survey conducted by FT Strategies*

## ➤ Context and methodology

Current CMS use & satisfaction

CMS implementation & maintenance

Factors influencing CMS purchase



# This study was designed by FT Strategies to understand how news organisations think about their current and future Content Management Systems needs

## What is this study:

As audiences have now firmly shifted to digital consumption, newsrooms are looking to implement Content Management Systems (CMS here on after) that are fit for purpose. The advent of AI has only expedited this need.

At FT Strategies, we wanted to ask publishers directly how they use and think about their CMS. We focussed on understanding:

- (1) Current CMS uses & satisfaction
- (2) CMS implementation & maintenance
- (3) Factors influencing CMS purchasing

## How did we conduct this research:

To understand these needs, we conducted a survey completed by **215 news organisations**, which was open between 11/03/2024 and 27/05/2024. The research was conducted using Qualtrics' survey tool.

*We would be happy to discuss further ways FT Strategies can support your CMS and tech stack needs. Please reach out to the FT Strategies [e-mail](#).*

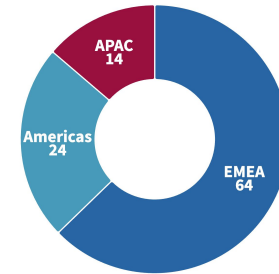
*For further geographic information:* We received survey responses from 102 publishers in 41 different countries.

## Who completed the survey:

### Regions

*Most of our respondents are EMEA-based publishers.*

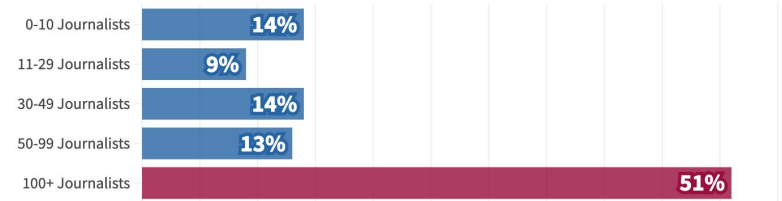
Base: 102



### Publisher size (as defined by number of full-time journalists)

*Most of our respondents have 100+ journalists. Percentage totals do not add to 100% due to rounding.*

Base: 102





Context and methodology

## > **Current CMS use & satisfaction**

CMS implementation & maintenance

Factors influencing CMS purchase

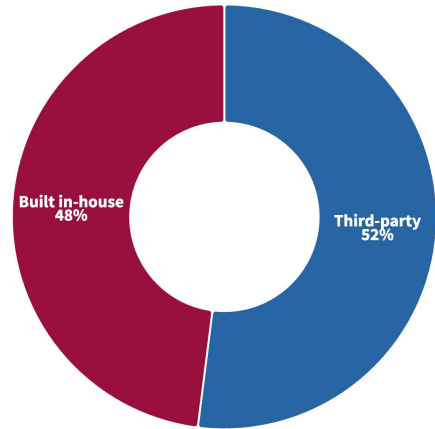


# Smaller publishers with less than 100 journalists tend to prefer third-party CMS solutions, with Wordpress the most popular across all regions

## There was roughly an equal split between publishers using in-house vs. third-party CMSs

Q: Do you have an in-house or third-party solution as your CMS?

Base: 98

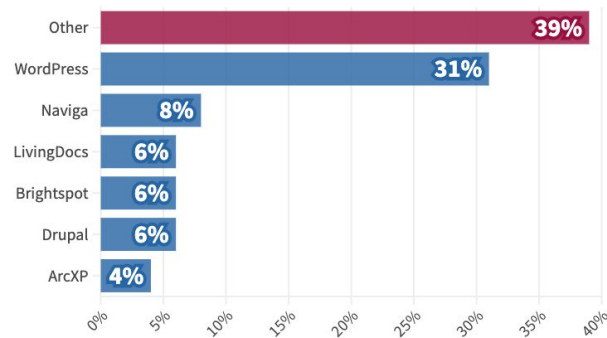


As expected, larger newsrooms have a bias towards creating in-house solutions, with 60% of publishers with less than 100 journalists opting for third-party vendors versus only 40% for those with over 100 journalists.

## Wordpress was by far the most popular third-party solution

Q: What third-party solution do you use as your CMS?

Base: 51

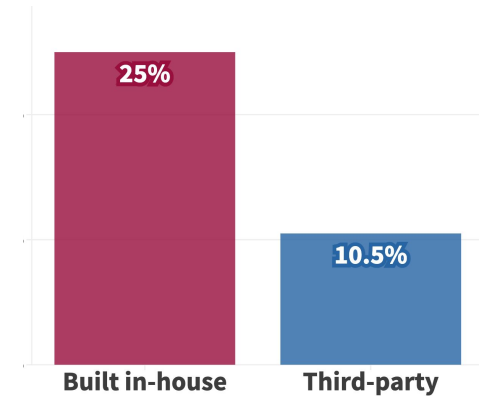


No CMS mentioned in 'Other' is used by more than 3 respondents displaying a fragmentation in the market, with large variety of regional off-the-shelf solutions.

## Publishers with in-house solutions tend to be more likely to be dissatisfied with their CMS

Q: From 1-5 how satisfied are you with your CMS? Average by CMS type

Base: 78

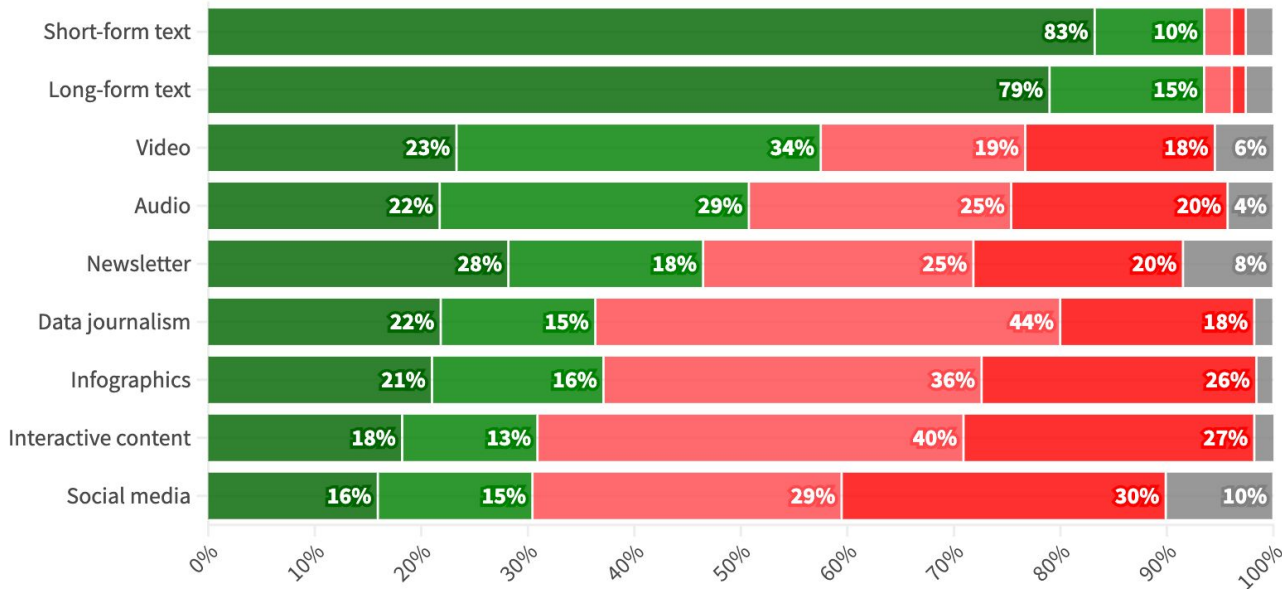


When combining respondents who graded their CMS 1 (Very Dissatisfied) or 2 (Dissatisfied), we counter-intuitively find that a quarter of publishers with in-house CMS are dissatisfied compared to 10% for publishers with off-the-shelf solutions.

# Most publishers feel that their CMS can fully support simple text-based formats, but are not well-suited for more complex formats like interactive, data, or infographics

To what extent does your CMS currently support the production of content in these formats?

Base: 78  
 Legend: Fully (Dark Green), Adequately (Light Green), Partially (Light Red), Not well-suited (Dark Red), Unsure whether the CMS can support the creation of this format (Grey)

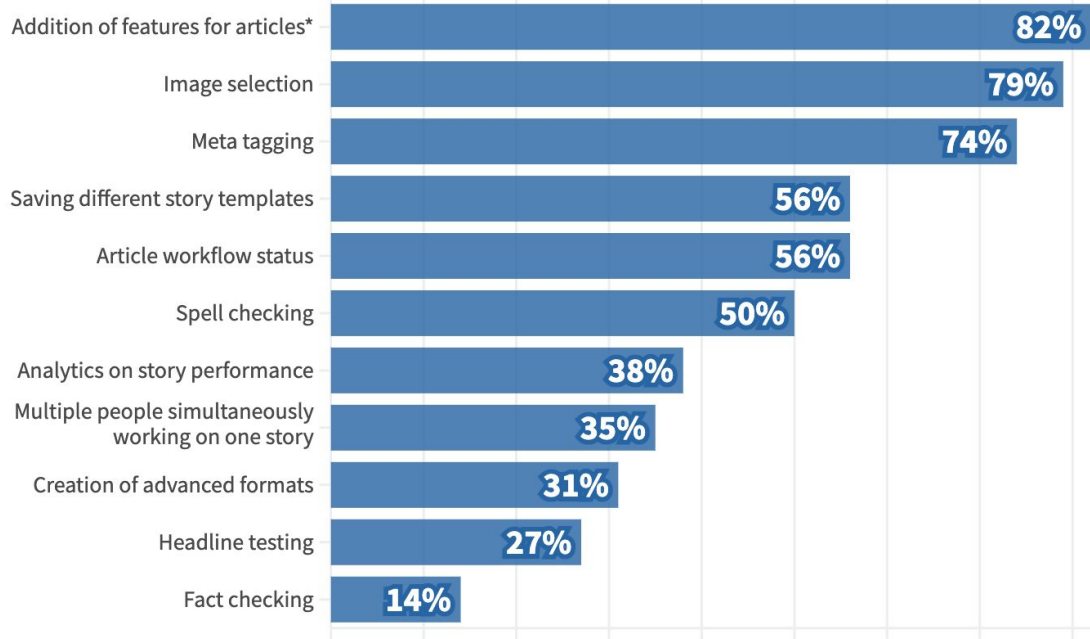


- As alternative formats continue to evolve more quickly and audience expect bespoke and immersive reading experiences, publishers might find themselves under pressure to either invest more heavily on their CMS or move to solution providers that have faster development capabilities to move into newer formats
- Many publishers creating interactive formats (like scrollytelling) are having to be creative and host those stories on bespoke pages using open-source CMSs that are separate to their own solutions. However, as these aren't pre-saved templates, these stories take longer to create. Moreover, as these stories aren't integrated into the CMS, publishers might not be able to monetise them as efficiently (e.g. less ad slots) or obtain the same audience analytics. Read more about how this is evolving at the FT [here](#)

# Respondents are satisfied with basic functionalities (finding images, tagging) but find advanced features (collaboration, fact-checking) lacking

## Which of the following features and functionalities does your CMS currently support?

Base: 78



- Only 35% of publishers noted they have the capacity of working simultaneously on one story within their CMS. This will increasingly become important as journalists expect the same level of collaboration that online word processor tools (like Google Docs) are capable of, as it enables more efficient sub-editing
- Only 38% of publishers noted that their CMS has analytics functionality directly embedded, and in fact, publishers often have to manually connect their production data with audience analytics. Publishers with this type of functionality directly embedded are able to better leverage data to make informed story-commissioning decisions
- Many of our respondents do not have fact-checking capabilities directly within their CMS, a feature that will grow in importance as AI disinformation spreads. 55% of respondents were also not aware of Provenance/C2PA standards (an open technical standard that records digitally signed information about the provenance of media, increasingly important to detect misinformation)

\* such as adding graphs, images, and various text-based elements like sub-paragraphs, quotation boxes, bullet-point summaries, and more.

Context and methodology

Current CMS use & satisfaction

# ➤ CMS implementation & maintenance

Factors influencing CMS purchase

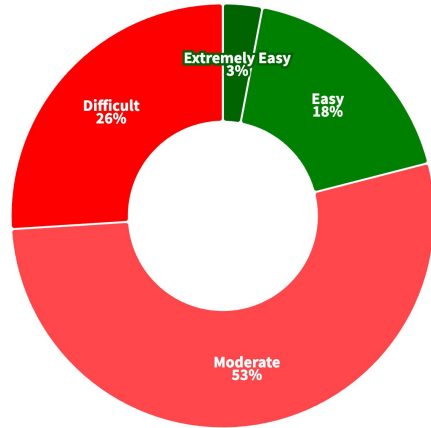


# Publishers struggle with CMS implementation and require consistent vendor support, while most handle ongoing CMS maintenance in-house

## Only 21% of publishers with third-party CMS solutions have had easy implementation

Q: How easy was the implementation of the CMS?

Base: 34

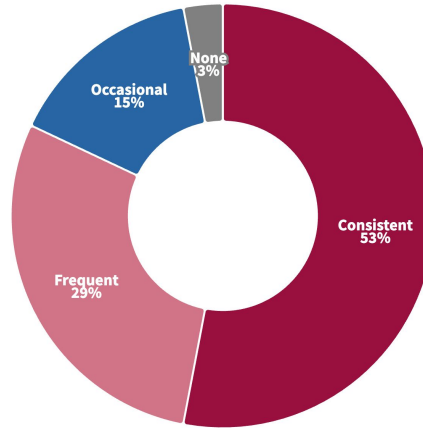


*It also tends to be more difficult for smaller publishers, with anywhere between 0-49 publishers, showcasing that implementation might be hardest for publishers with little internal tech expertise or staff.*

## Over half of publishers want tech vendors to consistently lend CMS customer support

Q: What level of support do you expect from a CMS vendor?

Base: 66

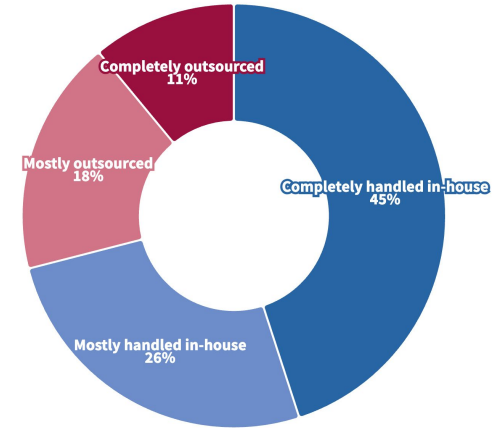


*Implementation isn't the only point that matters, as publishers expect CMS tech vendors to be of assistance throughout the lifecycle of a CMS.*

## Publishers tend to however completely handle CMS maintenance in-house

Q: Is the ongoing maintenance of the CMS handled in-house or outsourced?

Base: 66



*This percentage is of course higher for publishers with a home-built CMS, with roughly 78% handling maintenance completely in-house. 38% of publishers with third-party solutions are still handling maintenance mostly in-house.*

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## > Factors influencing CMS purchase

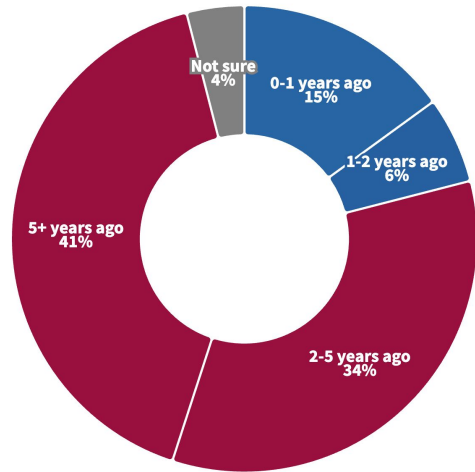


# Most publishers stick to their CMS, and agreed that price, ease of collaboration, implementation & customisation are most important factors when purchasing a CMS

Three-quarters of publishers have had their CMS for at least the last 2 years, with 41% for 5+ years

Q: When was your CMS acquired or launched?

Base: 98

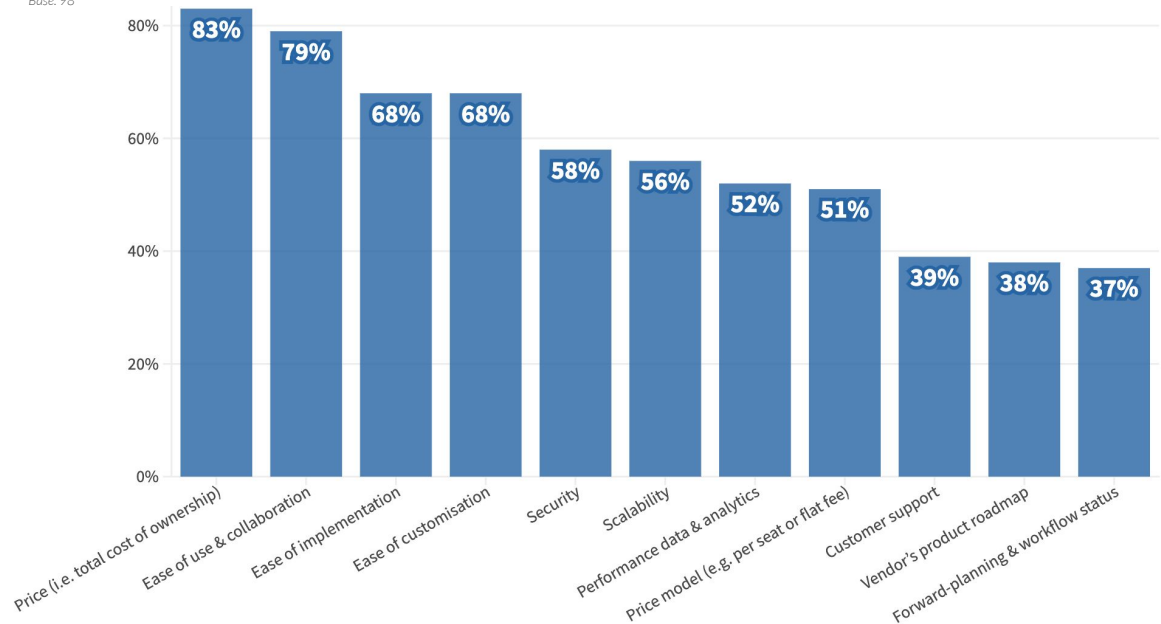


*It is crucial therefore that CMS vendors keep updating their tools with the latest technologies, and have open dialogues with their publishing clients to understand key priorities*

8 different factors received over 50% in terms of importance when making a decision on whether to purchase a CMS, showcasing a variety of needs for publishers

Q: When considering the purchase of a new CMS which criteria are important to your organisation?

Base: 98



Thank you for reading  
***How do Publishers feel about their CMS?***

a research survey conducted by **FT STRATEGIES**

Contact us via [Email](#) or [LinkedIn](#) if you are interested