

The background of the entire page is a dense, overlapping pattern of colorful umbrellas. The umbrellas are in various colors including orange, yellow, purple, teal, and pink. They are set against a dark blue and black checkered floor pattern. The umbrellas are of different sizes and are scattered across the entire frame, creating a vibrant and textured background.


FT STRATEGIES

Supported by

Google News Initiative

UNLOCKING GROWTH THROUGH DIVERSITY: FROM REACH AND REPRESENTATION TO ENGAGEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT

Insights from the GNI Audience Diversity Academy EMEA 2023

A large, solid blue L-shaped graphic element is positioned in the bottom right corner of the page, partially overlapping the main title text.

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WHY AUDIENCE DIVERSITY?

Audience diversity, or put simply, appealing to an audience outside of your core, is increasingly a key element in publishers' long-term financial sustainability agenda.

News organisations across the globe are casting around for new sources of growth as they are squeezed between mounting costs and slowing revenues. As targeting new audiences emerges as a strategic imperative, understanding the various facets of audience diversity is crucial to unlocking the breadth of its commercial potential.

The journey of “diversification through diversity” is a marathon rather than a sprint. It is vital to start with asking the right questions and setting the right targets. **Centering the audience diversification agenda solely around reach is not enough. Recognising the enabling role organisational diversity has on audience diversity, as well**

as embedding an engagement-first approach geared towards conversion and retention, is paramount to building a robust growth strategy.

Future-proofing publishers' growth strategies also requires a shift in mindset, particularly on the internal front. **It is no longer enough to talk about representation only - it is key to drive organisational change towards empowerment** that ensures the voices of those that represent target audiences are heard.

To be able to reach new segments effectively, it is vital to focus on plugging capability gaps. To enable the latter, especially in the face of a wide array of potential initiatives to choose from and limited resources to execute, **it is critical to have the right prioritisation methodology** in place to guide decision making.



The Audience Diversity Academy is **a practical five-month programme** that helps publishers better inform, engage and monetise on underrepresented target audiences, as well as build a more inclusive and representative organisation internally. Participants leave the programme with **a detailed diagnostic about key opportunities, an actionable plan for future initiatives, and a series of tangible customer and organisational experiments.**

Google News Initiative is proud to sponsor the programme as part of our ongoing partnership with FT Strategies. Together, we will support publishers in more than 50 countries over the next three years across topics that include Reader Revenue, Data and Product.

FOREWORD FROM GOOGLE



SULINA CONNAL, MANAGING DIRECTOR
FOR NEWS AND BOOKS PARTNERSHIPS
FOR EMEA GOOGLE

“Google News Initiative exists to support publishers in their efforts to produce impactful work for a wide range of news consumers and to help grow new monetisable audiences. Audience diversity is a key component of that and we’re grateful to FT Strategies and the participating publishers for their work over the past five months.”

CONTEXT

Audience diversity has been a key part of the Financial Times' subscription strategy over the past decade. We have invested significant time and effort to better understand and meet the needs of new audiences, while at the same time undertaking extensive changes internally to ensure diversity is embedded in the DNA of the organisation and there is firm leadership backing behind it.

This has translated into an array of monetary and non-monetary benefits for our business, and puts us in a good position to help other publishers unlock their potential to reach and engage new demographics that have been traditionally underserved.

At FT Strategies, the consultancy arm of the FT, we think about diversity as reaching the state of being a representative news organisation in the context of the target audience that it serves. Having had the opportunity to join forces with the Google News Initiative to co-run the first edition of the Audience Diversity Academy EMEA programme last year has provided us with a unique perspective on the

common challenges publishers face and what strategic and tactical levers can be pulled to enable audience growth.

Following the success of the first edition of the programme, Google News Initiative and FT Strategies have been delighted to continue their collaboration in the field of audience diversity and run a second edition of the Audience Diversity Academy EMEA in 2023.

This report captures **key learnings and actionable insights** from the Audience Diversity Academy EMEA 2023 programme, with a particular focus on younger segments. These learnings and insights will hopefully provide you with a deeper understanding of why diversity matters and, crucially, how publishers can address the multifaceted challenges they face when trying to attract and build a relationship with younger audiences.

The **case studies** featured towards the end of the report will also provide practical examples of experiments you can undertake in your own organisation to boost diversity and unlock growth.

We hope this report is a useful entry point for publishers who want to gain a better understanding of audience diversity and who aspire to reach and engage younger audiences more deeply.



ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

OVERVIEW

The GNI Audience Diversity Academy is a practical and interactive programme that helps 8 publishers better understand and engage underrepresented audiences externally, as well as build a more inclusive and representative organisation internally.

Programme outcomes

Publishers benefited from dedicated consulting sessions that:

- **Provide a holistic assessment of strategic strengths and opportunity areas**, coupled with tailored recommendations on how to address those
- **Outline best practices** from across the industry on how to increase audience diversity
- **Help establish a common organisational goal around diversity** through leveraging the [North Star goal-setting methodology](#)
- **Cultivate an experimentation-first mindset** that drives and enables audience growth
- **Offer tools to manage prioritisation** that enable focusing on the diversity initiatives that are most impactful

Approach & curriculum

The GNI Audience Diversity Academy 2023 programme had three distinct phases. During the Discovery phase, we surveyed a total of 6,525 readers and 456 employees at 8 publishers.

We also interviewed stakeholders, reviewed data dashboards and analysed organisational data relating to human resources, subscriptions and content over the past year.

This helped us create a holistic assessment of the strengths and opportunity areas publishers face, as well as provide tailored recommendations on how to address those.

We then worked with individual publishers to develop a North Star diversity goal that aims to guide their efforts and bring organisational alignment. It is designed to shine a light on ways to evaluate any new initiatives based on possible outcomes and empower staff members to voice their opinions and experiment.

The next step was to use this framework to come up with hypotheses and experiments to achieve those outcomes, taking minimal risk to achieve the most impact. Here, we underscored the importance of strengthening internal workforce diversity as well, rather than simply focusing on commercial objectives, since giving underrepresented staff members a voice at the table is a crucial catalyst for change.

Being part of this program has supplied us with the guidance and knowledge we were previously missing, and in turn has made us more confident in tackling digital sustainability

PROJECT SYNDICATE EMPLOYEE

Finally, we worked together to create a 12-month action plan for moving forward so that our publishers could continue experimenting and building capabilities, making strides on diversity even after our fruitful partnership drew to a close.

At each stage, the project teams and our consultants collaborated to analyse business data and processes through the lens of diversity. **The focus of the 2023 GNI Audience Diversity Academy programme has been primarily on age and gender diversity.**

That being said, ethnic, racial, demographic, socio-economic and any other types or forms of diversity are all important areas of focus that every publisher should consider too.

Our frameworks and methodologies have been consciously designed such that they can be used for supporting and enabling any type or form of diversity.

Throughout programme phases, publishers could also benefit from 10 inspiration sessions led by expert guest speakers not only on topics in the audience diversity space, but also in areas of interest such as digital transformation, product development and AI.”



587

under-35 readers surveyed in the programme, with an additional 5,938 over-35 readers surveyed as well

164

under-35 employees surveyed in the programme, with an additional 292 over-35 employees surveyed as well

62

in-depth interviews and sessions with publisher employees and industry experts

7

different markets in which participating publishers operate

>200

hours spent by the FTS team in analysis and consulting sessions in the programme

Participating publishers

This year's Audience Diversity Academy saw 8 publishers from Europe and Africa take part in the programme over the past five months. With full funding from the Google News Initiative, publishers were able to participate without any cost, investing only the time of their staff.



Germany

Börsen-Zeitung

South Africa

DAILY MAVERICK

Spain

DIARIO DE NAVARRA

Spain

EL MUNDO

Denmark

Information

Portugal

OBSERVADOR

The Czech Republic

Project Syndicate

The United Kingdom

THE COURIER

As mentioned, this report will detail useful case studies on how the programme participants have experimented with initiatives aimed at boosting diversity, both internally and externally. Examples of these initiative include:

- Testing differentiated onboarding flows for younger and female registrants in order to increase reader 'stickiness' and maximise retention
- Creating an '<35' working group with stakeholders from all parts of the business that will coordinate initiatives aimed at attracting younger readers and promoting better representation of younger voices within the organisation
- Using a "Career guide" as evergreen content to appeal to younger audiences and capture first-party data on age
- Experimenting with different price positioning tactics to increase conversion with younger audiences



Part 1

OUR FINDINGS: YOUNGER AUDIENCES

BACKDROP

Publishers face a number of pressing challenges in trying to reach and monetise younger audiences. In an era where there is unprecedented competition for attention, publishers face a slew of options and often do not know where to start.

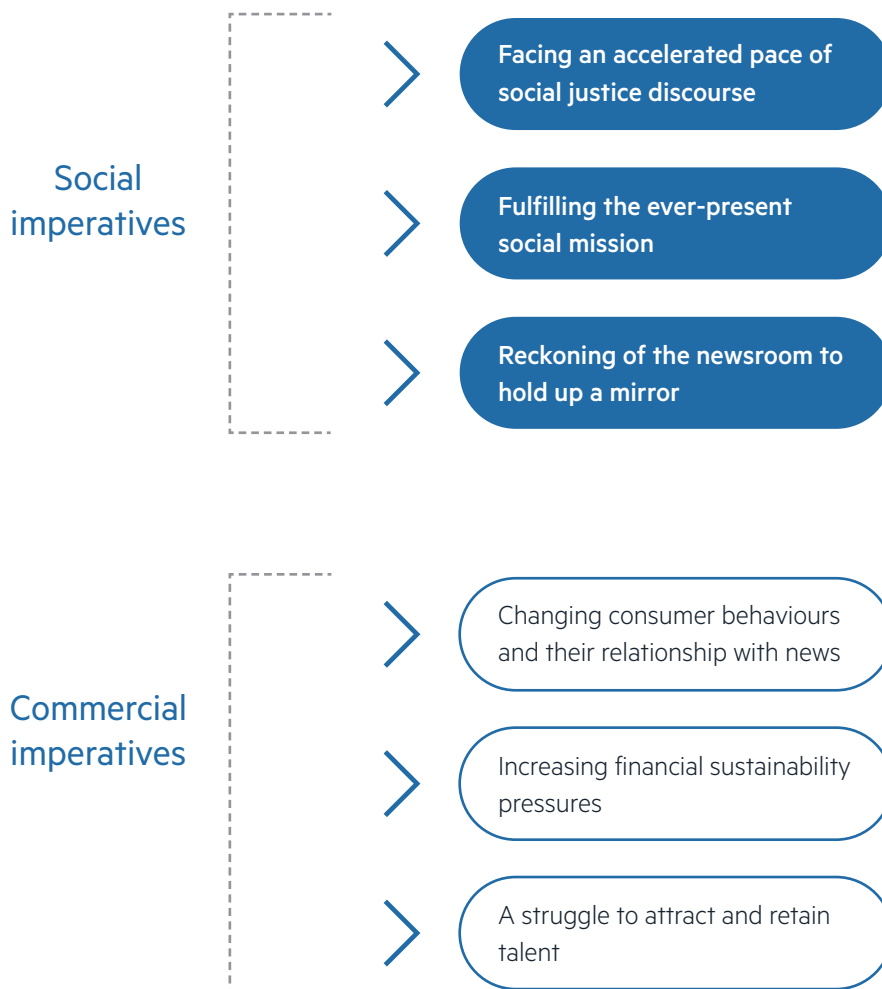
Many also face resource constraints as well as gaps in their own capabilities, particularly because workforces tend to be dominated by older-aged employees who themselves are not necessarily knowledgeable on how to appeal to younger consumers.



RECAP

Highlights from our first [Audience Diversity Report](#)

As highlighted in our report last year, there are new **social and commercial imperatives** that are increasingly bringing diversity to the front and centre of strategic conversations:



As we learned in our 2022 GNI Audience Diversity Academy programme, many publishers recognise the chasm between their abilities and their ambitions to reach new audiences. Yet, they struggle to formulate a cohesive, efficient strategy to bridge this diversity gap.

Empowering younger employees to undertake experiments is core to the solution so that content produced is truly relevant and reflects diverse audiences' needs. Formulating a clear value proposition for the audience is vital, as is ensuring that content is presented in a format and tone that truly resonates with them.

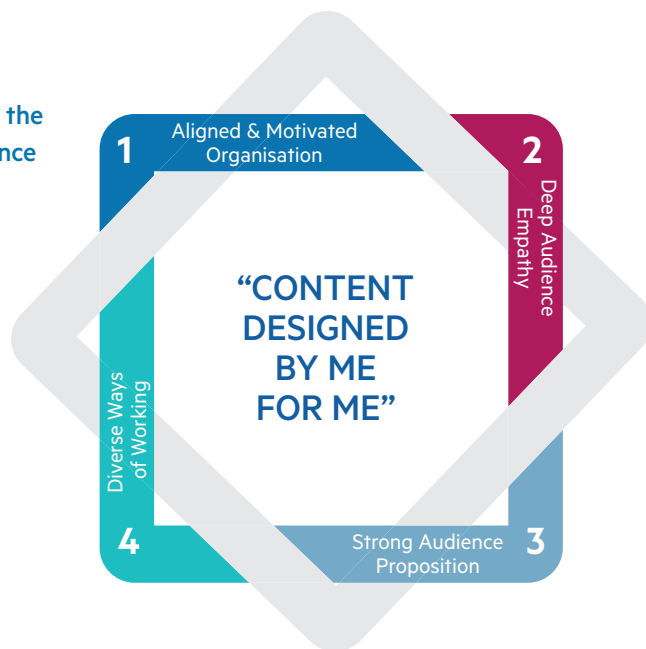
To address those and provide a holistic framework for better understanding and boosting audience diversity, we came up with our proprietary Audience Diversity framework. It comprises four interlocking competencies that publishers should look to establish to become empathetic organisations equipped to attract new audiences:

Aligned and motivated organisation to prioritise the under represented audience

Deep audience empathy for the underrepresented audience

Diverse ways of working which empower underrepresented voices

Strong audience proposition that the underrepresented segment values



The framework is designed to:

- 1 Help publishers **evaluate different functions of their business** and align on areas that may be prohibiting its diversity drive.
- 2 Illustrate the **strong connection between internal and external** competencies, which can often get lost in the focus to commercialise a target audience.
- 3 Provide a **set of practical initiatives** that can be worked on by cross-functional teams across the business to reach and engage new audiences.

It was also clear that the learnings from our publishers' experiments demonstrated the upsides of creating content and marketing that speak to targeted audiences. This is possible only with clear and committed leadership and a diversity agenda that all employees will buy into.

Each area of the framework contains sub-competencies that help publishers ascertain whether they are on the right track. If you'd like to know more details, please [get in touch](#).



MAIN CHALLENGES

Throughout the course of our work within the programme, we identified the practical manifestation of a number of interlinked challenges publishers face. These have already been well-documented in previous research.

1 News avoidance

Younger audiences are more likely to care about topics such as the environment and racial injustice, and are often [overwhelmed by negative news](#). As a result, they prefer to turn their attention to channels where lighter, more uplifting content is featured and where the [conversation is more in sync](#) with their own views, amid growing political polarisation.

2 Lack of loyalty

Younger consumers demand quick and [easy access to news](#) and are [more likely](#) to turn to social media and search engines for news, rather than news websites, casting a shadow over news brand loyalty initiatives and reader retention efforts.

3 Lack of trust

Even as younger news consumers [increasingly get their information from social media](#), they decry the lack of credible information, with [61% saying misinformation](#) is a major problem. Most believe the media, social media

companies, the government, and social media users equally bear blame for misinformation.

4 Ever-high UX expectations

Excellent UX is a “hygiene factor” for younger audiences: 62 percent of 15,600 Gen Z consumers said they will [not use apps that are hard to navigate](#).

5 Disintermediation

The trend of disintermediation is particularly relevant with younger audiences, with the proliferation of [generative AI's role](#) in media consumption posing a tangible risk of further amplifying it.

6 Skills gaps

Journalists are willing to adopt new distribution channels but they [struggle to reach younger audiences](#) through platforms such as [TikTok](#) and Instagram, even as these platforms [grow in popularity](#).

Most media professionals see the lack of trust in legacy media as their biggest challenge, followed by the realisation that the youth is indifferent to what they do. Half of the respondents never researched young audiences for their brands.

SURVEY OF 80 MEDIA PROFESSIONALS
DANUTA BREGUŁA &
LIESBETH NIZET, 2023

7 Limited internal diversity

Older employees tend to dominate the workforce, especially in key positions of authority at most publishers. Even in newsrooms where many younger people work, we found that their opinions are often disregarded by senior staff. Also, most internships for young journalists are [poorly paid or unpaid](#), limiting the pool of candidates to those who come from upper socioeconomic classes.

8 Limited data to understand user behaviour

Even as the removal of third-party cookies draws near, we find that publishers are often wary of asking users for data because they are worried about increasing friction and scaring customers away.



TAILWINDS TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF

Whilst there is indeed an array of challenges to overcome, news publishers can also benefit from certain tailwinds that pave the way for attracting, engaging and monetising on younger audiences.

1 Willingness to pay

Gen Z and Gen Y are more [willing to pay](#) for digital content than Gen X. In fact, on average, Gen Z and Gen Y consumers each pay for ~3 video subscriptions and ~1.5 audio subscriptions. Publishers who successfully use different content formats and offer a relevant and appealing value proposition can benefit from this.

2 Demand for value

More young people say they would be willing to pay for a subscription if the price were lower or the product bundle was more flexible and showed them [more value](#). If publishers can show them value and put in place habit-building behaviours, they stand a chance in winning them over.

3 Sense of ownership

Younger consumers demand to be heard and have a desire to contribute. TikTok and Instagram both exploit this desire successfully by featuring user-generated content. In addition, 44 percent of respondents in a global Gen Z survey said that, if given the

opportunity, they would like to [submit ideas](#) for product design. Publishers that tap into this sentiment can be more successful.

4 Relevance enabled by representation

Readers find news more valuable when [they see themselves represented in it](#) - and that is particularly true for Gen Z audiences. Publishers who can produce quality content that reflects diverse audiences have a better chance of succeeding in monetising them.

5 Search for trust, authenticity and transparency

Younger audiences report a demand for publishers to be more authentic (which, by the way, is part of the appeal of TikTok), [transparent](#) and representing users and their interests.

6 Tackling news avoidance through positive news

[Solutions journalism](#) is one successful way to overcome the perception of overwhelmingly negative or sensational news. Removing the perception that newspapers simply complain about problems and reminding readers that publishers are keen to help solve problems can be [remarkably effective](#).





KEY LEARNINGS TO ACTION ON

Building on our extensive interviews with publisher stakeholders and market experts, and drawing upon in-depth data analysis and cohort benchmarks, we have found the following key prerequisites for success with reaching, engaging and converting new audiences.

1 First-party data is a critical enabler of audience diversity - and there are smart ways to collect it

Gathering first-party data is crucial for developing a deeper understanding of target audiences and, ultimately, being able to make your strategy more audience-centred. Beyond that, first-party data is also a key enabler of personalisation - which the majority of younger readers have an expectation about.

Collecting robust first-party data involves a clearly articulated and well-communicated value exchange, particularly when it comes to younger audiences. It also involves following a coherent process that takes both new and existing users into account:

- Data from new users that is collected as part of the onboarding flow through prompts that are carefully positioned both in terms of tone (gentle and genuine explainers about why this data is gathered and how it benefits both the reader and the publication) and in terms of positioning (e.g. asking for ranges

on age on a separate prompt in case a prior “please provide your age” question with a closed-end numerical answer option might have not elicited a response).

- Data from existing users that is collected as a one-off exercise, often with incentives. For example, The Washington Post asks existing users to input their date of birth to receive a free digital copy of the front page of the newspaper for that date. Nudging users to download and use your publications’ mobile app in return for incentives such as free access to podcasts is yet another way to increase the amount of first-party data collected. Leveraging registration walls and events can also be an effective approach for gathering more first-party data.

2 Regular dialogue is key to strengthening the value proposition for younger audiences

Newsrooms that do diversity well make it a point to repeatedly speak – and listen to – target audiences to shape their products.

This is particularly true in the case of younger segments. Effective and open dialogue often calls not only for a regular cadence of audience and organisational surveys, but also for novel approaches such as coffee chats, targeted events, and focus groups with incentives. Insights collected this way serve to “fill” any gaps in first-party data, so long as the right data synthesis and triangulation processes are applied.

We do find that organisations that have a better feedback loop and data management (both on the quantitative and qualitative front) tend to have a more clearly articulated value proposition for younger audiences and are hence able to attract and engage them more effectively.

3 Younger audiences are more likely to search for keywords to choose what news to consume - which calls for excellent SEO

In an era where more than a third of news sites’ traffic comes from search, we find that younger audiences are more likely to search for news-related keywords



before going to a news platform, and this likelihood is inversely correlated with age - the lower the age, the higher the chance that search precedes the website visit. We have observed that millennials are 18% more likely to use search than average, and that figure is even higher for Gen Zs - 33%

This underscores the need to have strong SEO to optimise the top of the funnel for younger readers, and also sends a reminder about the importance of having relevant metatags that can aid both content discovery and content indexation.

4 Measure what matters - and aim to start with engagement and a “funnel” view

Understanding where each user comes from, what they consume, where they went next, what made them convert to either a registrant or a paying subscriber, and why they dropped out

of the conversion funnel, is paramount. We have found that this helps in prioritising key product decisions, which feed into broader business objectives.

Measuring engagement on a per-article, per-vertical and per-user level is a critical prerequisite for understanding younger audiences, particularly from the point of registration onwards. Adopting engagement measures such as Quality Reads or [RFV](#) across the newsroom and more widely in the business can be a turning point for your strategy.

Our partner, the Google News Initiative, also provides free resources such as the [News Consumer Insights](#) tool that helps enrich a publisher's knowledge of its audience, and the recently launched [Publisher Sustainability Diagnostic](#) which helps provide a holistic view of strategic strengths and opportunities across multiple dimensions.

5 A slick mobile app is a must - and better delivers content formats that younger audiences like

The app channel is a great avenue for creating a smooth and engaging environment where younger users choose to interact with your content rather than navigating away from it.

Apart from having the potential to provide a slicker UX in line with younger audiences' expectations, it also allows the publisher to collect valuable user data, broaden the array of sampling techniques (e.g. push notifications), and, ultimately, build loyalty more effectively. Readers under the age of 35 are 28% more likely to use the app channel to consume news than >35 readers, and for some publishers the app is already the second most preferred channel for younger audiences.

Part of the drivers behind those preferences lie in the fact that the app emerges as a “hygiene factor” in enabling the smooth delivery of new formats.

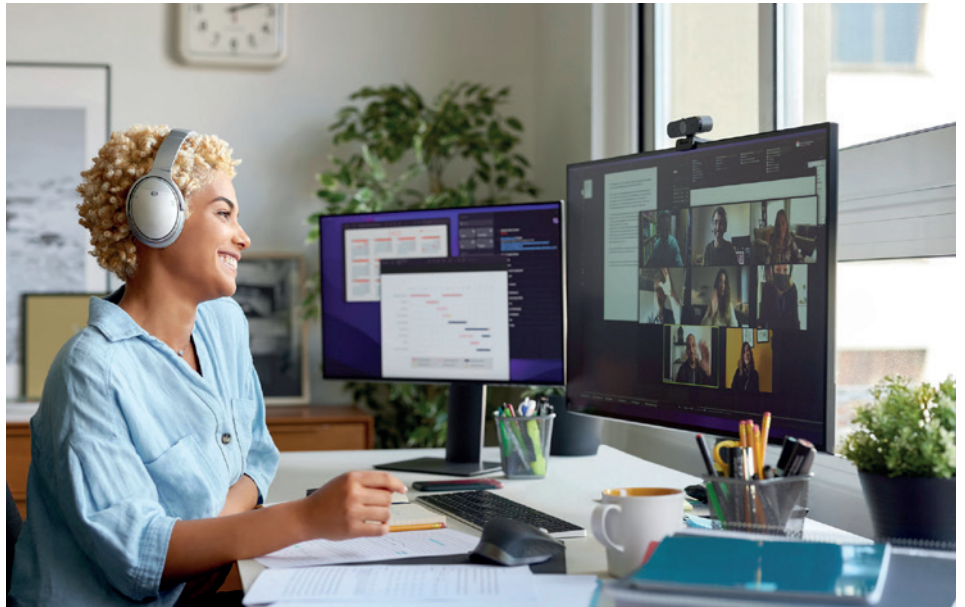
Podcasts, explainers and videos are three good examples of news formats that work well, provided they are about content that is relevant to new audiences, strike the right tone, and are distributed through channels where the target audience can easily find and share them further. We have found that those are particularly effective for reaching younger and female audiences, where the user is often multi-tasking or trying to learn while consuming news.

6 Channelling social media traffic to native platforms should be part of your social media strategy

Social media is an increasingly important channel for building presence and brand awareness. However, beyond social media’s brand amplification role and direct monetisation paths (e.g. likes and clicks), publishers also need to consider its role in driving traffic back to their native platforms.

Nudging younger audiences to go from social to native platforms is critical for long-term commercial success and goes hand-in-hand with publishers’ efforts to bolster social media presence in the first place.

Once a user enters a news site through a side door such as social media, publishers should ideally aim to engage them through a seamless, flawless



experience and, ideally, gently and repeatedly prompt them to register or download their app - a behaviour that we have seen is closely correlated with habit formation and retention.

Needless to say, the social media environment itself is also a fruitful avenue for experimentation with younger audiences, as it absorbs minimal incremental effort. Also key is to ensure that social media efforts are coordinated with the broader business.

7 Pricing (and its positioning & payment schedule) matters

Price has unequivocally been reported as a key factor that deters younger audiences from considering to subscribe - more than 40% of under <35 survey participants identified it as such. Apart from pure discounts, there are other pricing approaches that could make the difference when it comes to converting more price-sensitive audiences such as younger ones:

- Offering trial discounts with gradual pricing increase steps, with those being complemented by onboarding tactics that foster habit formation
- Positioning the price of the subscription to “equate” with the price of an item from everyday life (e.g. “a month of premium content at the price of your daily cup of coffee”)
- Quoting annual prices in monthly terms, highlighting a discount that comes with signing up for a longer time period, and potentially offering a monthly “instalments” payment schedule to an annual plan
- Proactively managing the “graduating from university” point in the lifecycle (when graduates also might be losing free access to your publication) through a discounted “reduced” package (like the [FT Edit](#)) in the first few years of readers’ careers (when their ability to pay and willingness to pay for news are still relatively low).

8 “Market making” through partnerships and new products is paramount

Horizontal and vertical partnerships with educational institutions, brands and even local competitors is an important stepping stone for combating news avoidance and attracting younger people to news consumption in the first place, particularly for a generation that might have not grown up seeing a physical newspaper on the living room table.

Starting early, focusing on reading awareness campaigns and working directly with teachers and professors is key to ensuring there will be a “market” for news consumption in the future when younger generations will have grown up.

9 Timing matters - and it is a dimension of news consumption that is often overlooked

Younger audiences not only consume different content compared to older ones, but they also do so at different times of the day and week. Successful publishers explore the timing of consumption and change their publication patterns accordingly - and these are components of content strategy that are often overlooked or under-researched within news organisations.

Even if your content is highly relevant to younger audiences and is delivered through the right channel, not putting it forth at the right time or at the right intervals could end up being a significant blocker to reaching and engaging younger audiences.

10 Empowerment of diverse voices beyond representation goes a long way

It is not only about representation but also about being heard - organisations where younger and female colleagues feel their voices are heard are more likely to have more relevant content and a more appealing value proposition for younger and female audiences.

With younger employees in particular, we did find that, on average, they felt 16% less heard and 18% less empowered than more senior counterparts.

Undertaking measures such as opening up internal channels for feedback (including anonymous ones), taking steps to ensure the organisation operates in a “flatter” and more agile way, creating working groups with younger representatives (which a number of the participants in the GNI Audience Diversity Academy already undertook as an initiative in the Test & Learn phase of the programme), and implementing more inclusive hiring and retention practices, are all key for “enabling” internal diversity and hence bolstering external audience diversity.



Part 2 - CASE STUDIES

PARTICIPANT APPROACHES





Germany

Börsen-Zeitung

The challenge

Börsen-Zeitung has B2B subscriptions comprising the bulk of its reader revenues. One of the publisher's aims is to diversify into the B2C space and increase its reach and engagement with more diverse readers.

However, there has been a concern that the price point of its regular subscription packages is too high for some target segments, and that some of its content may not be seen as relevant by younger and more diverse audiences.

The results

Börsen-Zeitung believes that providing a briefer reading experience for time-constrained news consumers at a more palatable price point will encourage content sampling and drive more target readers to its platforms. The newspaper is launching a new product called BZ Smart. The reader can choose five articles per week from a pool of different articles suitable for a B2C audience. This is charged at a much lower price than the regular subscription package. An editor will select the content according to what is likely to resonate best with a B2C audience, based on internal data as well as user feedback.

This initiative widens the range of readers the newspaper can reach and provides them with a low-cost opportunity to sample content that is relevant to them. It helps build a habit of news consumption and helps set the foundations for a more diversified recurring revenue business.

Very educational experience
- we received many impulses,
now we have to get into
implementation

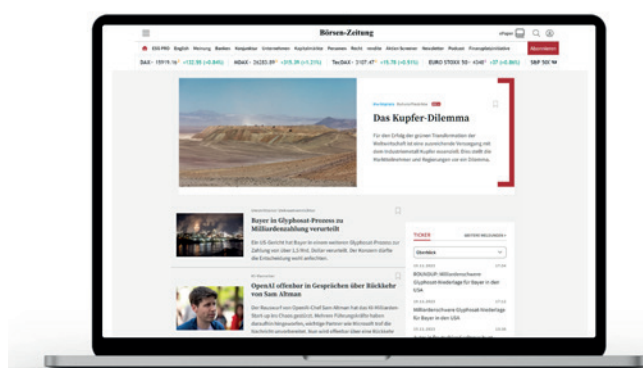
CATHERINE VON MALTZAN,
TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME MANAGER,
BÖRSEN-ZEITUNG



Experiment
focus

Content sampling

through the new BZ Smart low-cost
subscription package which will feature
5 articles a week to let a more diverse pool
of consumers explore premium content
and get in the habit of reading it.







The challenge

Despite its celebrated position as a leading voice in South African news and investigation, Daily Maverick faces a pressing challenge. While its readership has grown since its launch 14 years ago, the makeup of its core audience remains notably skewed towards an older demographic. This trend runs counter to the predominantly younger and diverse population reflected in the latest South African census.

Daily Maverick needs to tap into the potential for broadening its readership base, starting with understanding who their younger and more diverse audiences are and working towards attracting and converting them.

The results

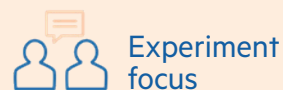
With the aim of segmenting and targeting younger and more diverse audiences, Daily Maverick recognised the need for strengthening its first-party data collection. To do this, it took a resourceful evergreen approach - using a 'Career Guide' to prompt users to provide their age whilst simultaneously gathering intel on younger audiences' preferences and interests.

To double down on the impact of the experiment design, Daily Maverick also provided space to collect younger audiences' emails, as they register interest for potential upcoming webinars on their career interests of choice. With initial insights trickling in, Daily Maverick has gathered an initial view of the topics of interest of this younger segment.

By using an evergreen approach, this publication is able to continuously iterate the process, amend along the way, and also potentially seek to establish commercial partnerships related to the vertical.

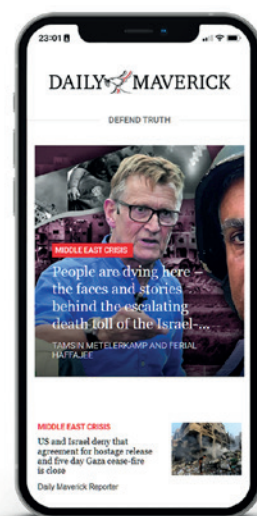
The great thing about experimenting with a Career Guide to enhance our understanding of target audiences is that we are also promoting evergreen content

ALET LAW,
AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT MANAGER
DAILY MAVERICK



First-party data

is the focus of Daily Maverick's experiment in an effort to deepen their understanding of target segments and more diverse audiences.







Spain

DIARIO DE NAVARRA

The challenge

Diario de Navarra, a Spanish regional publisher, has found it challenging to be able to build a deeper understanding of younger audiences, particularly around their choice of content and behaviour across channels. Low data sharing across the organisation further exacerbated this challenge. Internal and consumer research made it clear that there was room to follow a more data-informed approach so as to help Editorial and other departments align on how to better serve younger audiences.

The results

Diario de Navarra decided to leverage their existing Gen Z working group to experiment with idea gathering, making insights visible across the organisation. The team organised an event called 'Tortilla Day', marketed the event across the organisation and invited all employees, with a particular emphasis on the fact that the data findings are intended to complement the work at the Editorial department.

The design of the experiment allowed the working group to showcase the research they had been collating on younger audiences. The data-led approach enhanced the credibility of the event and served to fast-track organisational buy-in.

By placing a ballot box at the event, the organisers were able to gather more than 50 new ideas and opinions about the future of the publisher's value proposition. This will help Diario de Navarra pave the way to enhance cross-collaboration in the organisation, and to gain a deeper understanding on how reach and engage younger audiences.

The insights shared by the FTS team have proven to be invaluable, prompting us to delve deeper into our considerations

ESTEFANÍA NICOLÁS RECARTE,
DIRECTOR OF DIGITAL STRATEGY,
MARKETING AND SALES, DIARIO DE NAVARRA



Experiment
focus

Data sharing

is the enabler Diario de Navarra chose to run an initiative on so as to promote higher visibility across the organisation and foster a deeper understanding of younger audiences.





Banesto

La Faja
RESTAURANTE

Monedas
Billetes
Sellos
Compra - Venta
Pto. MAYOR, 25



The challenge

El Mundo, a Spanish national publication, has seen healthy growth in its subscriber base over the past year. In spite of this, El Mundo has found it challenging to attract more younger audiences in its subscriber mix.

The analysis performed as part of the GNI Audience Diversity Academy indicated that while younger readers had an above-average willingness to provide their details to register, they had a below-average propensity to convert from non-paying registrants to paying subscribers.

The results

With the aim of further attracting younger audiences' interest in premium content, El Mundo plans to utilise its recently refurbished app to experiment with push notifications as a content sampling mechanism, in a similar fashion as the FT Edit app leverages push notifications for sampling.

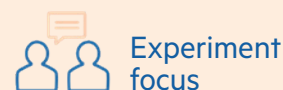
The experiment will entail sending push notifications about premium content to users who already have the El Mundo app but are not subscribed to the paid content section.

Using the app as a medium to reach younger audiences is further informed by the results of the audience survey conducted as part of the Audience Diversity Academy, which indicated that younger audiences ranked accessing news through apps highly.

In addition, El Mundo will be running further analysis on the data from the audience and organisational surveys conducted as part of the Audience Diversity Academy so as to outline further initiatives on how to strengthen its value proposition for younger audiences.

What we are missing is putting ourselves in the shoes of the user to really understand what they like and how they consume

SARA PEREZ, SUBSCRIPTIONS MANAGER,
EL MUNDO

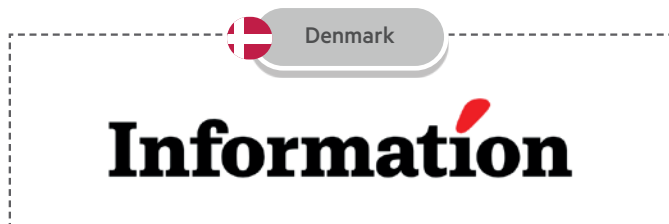


Push notifications

is the tactical mechanism that El Mundo plans to experiment with to allow younger users to sample premium content at their channel of preference.







The challenge

Dagbladet Information's values resonate well with younger audiences in general, with the publisher's activist stance carrying a particular appeal in this demographic. In spite of this, the publisher's subscription rates among readers under the age of 35 are still relatively low, and churn rates, including during the trial and sampling process, are still relatively high. As per that, Dagbladet Information is aiming to strengthen habit formation and user stickiness of its younger audiences.

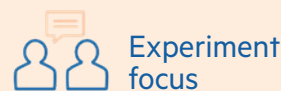
The results

Dagbladet Information decided to tailor the onboarding journey for younger readers according to their specific needs and interests. This includes changes such as advertising the app to younger readers, providing summaries of articles, and weaving in an audio component to resonate with younger audiences' interest in consuming content in different formats.

This way, Information will be able to surface content that is relevant from very early on in the relationship with the reader, providing more "reasons" for younger readers to stay. This initiative will allow the publisher to experiment with tone, formats and prompts based on the needs of a segment of users that it anticipates will grow the base of its future subscription business.

Working with consultants on the programme pushed us to rethink our onboarding strategy - we have also been reminded of how simple things can be effective

SIMON FANCONY, CHIEF COMMERCIAL OFFICER,
DAGBLADET INFORMATION



Segment-based onboarding

which reflects subscription efforts across the conversion funnel specifically focused on younger readers.







The challenge

One of Observador's main goals on its strategic agenda is to grow its readership among younger Portuguese - which is by no means an easy task given younger people's different media consumption habits.

Observador was looking to find avenues to experiment with ways to reach a younger audience while at the same time minimising the risk of alienating existing readers. In an attempt to do so, Observador decided to set up a cross-functional team of young employees internally to own and drive efforts aimed at reaching younger audiences.

The results

The young committee now has an agenda with ownership of a number of strategic and tactical initiatives. For example, Observador will let the team run a "native" channel for younger audiences - its Instagram account, for a period of seven days to see if changing the voice, the cadence of posts, and the mix of content that is being promoted would help reach more readers under the age of 35.

This way, it aims to empower younger staff to experiment on a platform where target audiences are present, surfacing content that is likely to be meaningful to younger readers.

Observador is also considering announcing openly to its audience that it is experimenting with changing the team that is running its account so that it can produce content that resonates more deeply with a younger audience.

The objective is to gradually build a community by demonstrating to younger readers that Observador cares about and listens to them.

Our participation in the academy is accelerating our thought process and strategic plans when it comes to being more audience- and user-focused

CATARINA CABRITO, PRODUCT MANAGER, OBSERVADOR



Empowering

a cross-functional team of younger employees to design and own various initiatives aimed at reaching and engaging younger audiences.







The Czech Republic

Project Syndicate

The challenge

Project Syndicate publishes and distributes leading commentary and analysis on current affairs across the world. The organisation has historically found it challenging to reach younger and female readers and lead them down the sales funnel. The audience survey run as part of the GNI Audience Diversity Academy confirmed the findings from prior research suggesting that most of Project Syndicate's target segments found its annual subscription price too expensive.

The results

Project Syndicate decided to experiment with the presentation of the price to see if offering a different subscription option would help it win back churned subscribers. The publisher ran an A/B test for a month, offering more than 1,000 readers the choice of an annual pricing rate or the equivalent of it quoted at a monthly rate instead. That way, Project Syndicate aimed to lower any psychological "barriers" to subscribing that could be associated with quoting annual prices in bulk.

The design of the experiment helped Project Syndicate understand the price sensitivity of their readers without affecting revenue from its broader subscription stream. In this way, the publication was able to better evaluate its options in a low-risk environment by tailoring its marketing strategy instead of necessarily changing its pricing per se.

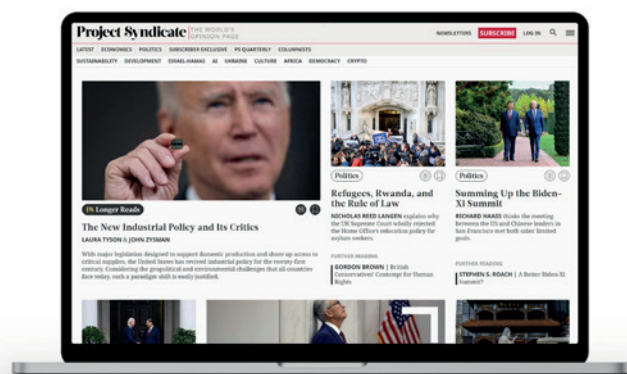
As a result of our participation in the Audience Diversity Academy, we feel more confident and motivated as an organisation to tackle all the challenges that we are facing

SHIRIN SHITY,
DIGITAL MARKETING EXECUTIVE,
PROJECT SYNDICATE

Experiment
focus

Price positioning

is the focal point of Project Syndicate's experiment, as they aim to test for a higher conversion rate among a more diverse audience by changing how they quote subscription price (annual vs monthly)





MEADOWSIDE

COURIER PLACE

ALBERT SQUARE



The United Kingdom

THE COURIER

The challenge

The Courier has been looking for ways to create opportunities for younger employees to participate in and lead internal initiatives more widely and understand their relationship with subscriptions.

As its audience consists predominantly of readers above the age of 35, soliciting input from under-35 employees on how to reach under-35 readers is ever more relevant. The results of the organisational survey run as part of the GNI Audience Diversity Academy programme suggested a large share of under-35 employees wished to be more involved in shaping the publisher's value proposition.

This prompted The Courier to set up an open invite to all under-35 employees to take part in a series of focus group sessions.

The results

The focus groups covered questions around subscriptions to understand participants' preferences, and attracted more than 30 volunteers. Participants were asked for input on subscriptions they have, the reasons why they have subscribed and why they have cancelled. The feedback will be used to understand the younger audiences relationship with subscriptions, with the aim of further bolstering The Courier's transformation towards audience centricity.

The Courier believes younger employees and readers alike will feel empowered and develop a deeper sense of ownership as a result of this initiative. This effort also ties in with the publication's broader mission to provide trusted local journalism that matters to its community.

Being a part of the audience diversity academy has been amazing. We've learned so much about the power of different voices. Now, we're excited to take those lessons into the future. We want The Courier to be a place where younger voices not only thrive but lead the conversation. And we want to represent and help the younger people in our communities.

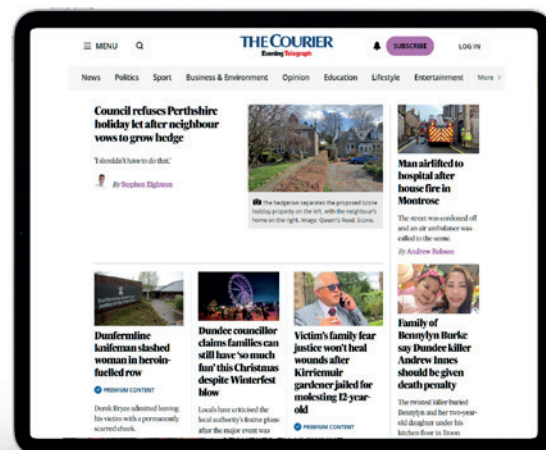
CHERYL LIVINGSTONE,
SPECIAL PROJECTS EDITOR,
THE COURIER



Experiment focus

Empowering

younger employees and giving them a sense of ownership by reflecting their views on content and strategy



CONCLUSION

In this report, we have aimed to showcase the importance of audience diversity as a critical enabler of diversification for publishers - demonstrating the imperative to deepen the understanding of the target audiences you are trying to reach. By being forward-thinking, publishers can ensure sustainable growth, whilst staying true to - and amplifying - their social and commercial missions.

Through a conglomeration of work with global publishers and our own experience at the Financial Times, we have aimed to lay out a practical perspective through the Audience Diversity Framework which treats external and internal organisational diversity as inextricably linked. Within the GNI Audience Diversity Academy programme, we have applied the framework and its collection of best practices to gender-related and age-related diversity - with this report detailing our deep-dive into age-related diversity in particular.

Working with 8 publishers across EMEA through a period of 5 months has allowed all parties involved to collectively expand their understanding on the topic of audience diversity. We believe sharing those learnings, alongside with practical advice and experimentation case studies, would help increase the awareness of the importance of audience diversity in the publishing ecosystem more widely.

From adjusting content topics and collecting first-party data, to creating internal teams and events to socialise learnings and achieve organisational buy-in - the case studies we have featured in this report have hopefully sparked inspiration for you and your organisation to take action.

There is little doubt that creating and actioning on an audience diversity strategy is by no means an easy task. We hope our findings and the progress achieved by the 8 publishers that have participated in the GNI Audience Diversity Academy underscore the benefits of embedding a data-informed approach and aspiring towards a shift of mindset.

Google News Initiative

Unlock growth through diversity

We're delighted to announce that the Audience Diversity Academy will run again in 2024, thanks to the support of the **Google News Initiative**.

Register your interest by filling out this [short form](#) on the FT Strategies website and someone will get in touch with you to share more information and discuss your suitability.

To learn more about the full suite of publisher programmes GNI offers, please scan the QR code below:



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FT STRATEGIES

FT Strategies

FT Strategies is a boutique consulting firm within the Financial Times. Staffed by the experts who successfully transformed the FT's business model in the face of disruption, FT Strategies works with organisations looking to innovate using data, helping build sustainable digital businesses. Find out more at ftstrategies.com.

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The Financial Times is one of the world's leading business news organisations, recognised locally and internationally for its authority, integrity and accuracy. The FT has a record paying readership of more than 2.4 million, ninety percent of which is digital revenue. It is part of Nikkei Inc., which provides a broad range of information, news and services for the global business community.

Google News Initiative

The Google News Initiative (GNI)

The Google News Initiative represents Google's largest-ever effort to help journalism thrive in the digital age. Through its partnerships, programs and products, the Google News Initiative works with thousands of organisations worldwide to support quality independent journalism, financial sustainability, and development of new technologies that drive innovation. Google allocated \$300 million over three years to energise these collaborations, and to lay the foundation for new products and programs for a diverse set of news publishers, to benefit the entire ecosystem. This includes supporting thought leadership on topics like consumer revenue, advertising and data that are critical to the future of the news industry.

THANK YOU

We would also like to extend our sincere gratitude to Lyndsey Jones, Luba Kassova and Lee Williamson for being involved in the delivery of the GNI Audience Diversity Academy EMEA 2023 programme and for contributing to the broadening of our perspectives and knowledge on the topic.

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