

Creating Value for the Digital Reader in the Context of Sustainable Journalism

Sürdürülebilir Habercilik Bağlamında Dijital Okur için Değer Yaratmak

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Abstract

Because of digitalisation, social media platforms usage for news follow-up, the changing news consumption habits of young readers, and the COVID-19 pandemic, traditional journalism has been in a crisis for a while. Social media has become a significant competitor for news organisations in terms of both news consumption and advertising. Using the findings of the news consumption habits survey conducted with 200 participants in the United Kingdom (in London and Cardiff), this study discusses readers' expectations and consumption habits in the context of sustainable journalism. The survey constitutes a part of large-scale research carried out with the financial support of TÜBİTAK. It is revealed that readers heavily prefer digital platforms, including social media, for news follow-up, and this interest increased during the Pandemic. The main expectations of the consumer/reader are reliability, easy access/use, easy-to-follow, personalised/reader-specific content, and less advertising. Among the findings is that young readers prefer social media platforms that are not "news organisations" to follow the news. Reader-based revenues are regarded as the most crucial income for sustainable journalism. Media needs to understand the reader's expectations and produce news content that will create value for them to generate sustainable reader income.

Keywords: *News Consumption, Sustainable Journalism, Value Creation, Reader Income, United Kingdom*

Öz

Dijital teknolojilerin yaygınlaşması, sosyal medya platformlarının haber takibi amacıyla kullanılması, özellikle genç okurların değişen haber-tüketim alışkanlıkları ve Covid-19 pandemisinin etkisiyle geleneksel gazetecilik bir süredir kriz içindedir. Sosyal medya gerek haber tüketimi gerekse de reklam açısından haber kuruluşları için ciddi bir rakip haline gelmiştir. Bu çalışmada, Birleşik Krallık'ta Londra ve Cardiff şehirlerinde 200 katılımcı ile gerçekleştirilen haber tüketim alışkanlıkları anketinin bulgularından yararlanılarak sürdürülebilir habercilik bağlamında okuyucuların haberden beklentileri ve haber tüketim alışkanlıkları tartışılmaktadır. Anket, TÜBİTAK'ın mali desteği ile yürütülen sürdürülebilir habercilik konusundaki geniş çaplı bir araştırmanın parçasını oluşturmaktadır. Bulgular, okuyucunun, haber takibi için sosyal medya da dahil olmak üzere dijital platformları yoğun bir şekilde tercih ettiğini ve Pandemi döneminde dijital platformlara ilginin arttığını ortaya koymaktadır. Tüketicinin/okuyucunun temel beklentisinin güvenilirlik, kolay erişim, okuma ve kullanım kolaylığı, kişiselleştirilmiş, okuyucuya özel içerik ve daha az reklama maruz kalmak olduğu görülmektedir. Genç okurların "haber kuruluşu" olmayan sosyal medya platformlarını haber takibi için tercih ettikleri de bulgular arasındadır. Okur-temelli gelirler sürdürülebilir habercilik için temel gelir kaynaklarından biridir. Medyanın, okur gelirlerini arttırmak ve bunu sürdürülebilir kılmak için okuyucuların beklentilerini doğru analiz etmesi ve okuyucu için değer yaratacak haber içerikleri üretmesi gerektiği görülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Haber Tüketimi, Sürdürülebilir Habercilik, Değer Yaratma, Okur Geliri, Birleşik Krallık*

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Introduction

Traditional journalism has been in a crisis for a while, because of spreading digital technologies, the usage of social media platforms for news follow-up, the changing news consumption habits of young readers, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Traditional printed media is shifting towards digital platforms, trying to cope with challenges besides the advantages of digitalisation. Digitalisation is one of the reasons for decreasing printed newspapers' sales incomes. Online news platforms are mostly preferred since they are easily accessible and offer personalised news to the reader's interest. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the reader's news consumption habits and their daily working life.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created adverse conditions, especially for the local media, and this process has made the concepts of digital transformation and sustainable journalism more important. Sustainable journalism refers to the creation of a sustainable structure on its behalf, which can be summarised as the survival of media organisations, the provision of sufficient income for journalists and all employees, the creation of suitable and alternative channels for the audiences, and the provision of reliable and uninterrupted news flow. Sustainability has three basic components: economic, social, and environmental (Berglez et al. 2017). Sustainable development is based on the idea that natural resources are limited, and industrial "development" will destroy the resources. Similarly, resources are running out in journalism. One of the main sources of sustainable journalism is the interest/loyalty of the reader and the income obtained from them. This article discusses changing reader preferences based on the news consumption habits survey findings, that part of a large-scale study on sustainable journalism in the United Kingdom. This project was conducted with the financial support of TUBITAK and hosted by Cardiff University JOMEC in the 2021-2022 academic year.

The United Kingdom is one of the most important examples of the rooted journalism tradition and public service broadcasting. The emergence of the English press dates back to the 17th century. Britain, the leading country of the industrial revolution, is one of the countries where mass media first emerged in parallel with technological developments. In parallel with the media's rapid and strong improvement, daily newspapers have been an indispensable daily routine for many years. The support and income of readers have been an important source of power for the press in the UK. Local press also has a strong, albeit dwindling, print readership (Barclay et al., 2022, s.8). Because of this deep-rooted history, understanding the news-following habits of the readers/audiences in the United Kingdom may be enlightening for many countries.

The survey tries to find answers to main questions such as the frequency of following the media, the preference rates of printed newspapers and digital platforms, the most preferred media outlets/channels, their reasons for preferring these media outlets, and the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on news following habits. Considering these answers and within the framework of sustainable journalism, what can be done by the media to protect the readers' interest and the audience's income is discussed.

Studies on sustainable journalism in Turkey mostly focus on digital platforms and new income models. The changing news consumption habits of the readers and their expectations are one of the areas that are relatively neglected. Generating income from the reader seems to be reduced to gaining engagement by increasing clickbait and instant digital traffic. This situation

creates an effect that shakes the reader's trust in news organisations and reduces their loyalty. For this reason, it is thought that this study may contain illuminating results for Türkiye as well.

1. The Role of Readers in Sustainable Journalism and Value Creation

The concept of sustainability in terms of protecting the environment and producing environmentally friendly development policies can be traced back to the 1970s. One of the most important texts in this field is the World Conservation Strategy, created in collaboration with various organisations and published in 1980 (Bozlağan 2005: 1017). The concept of sustainable development has been discussed in various international texts and reports, and its scope and dimensions have been expanded. It was aimed to develop realistic and applicable strategies in the face of new risks and threats emerging in today's conditions at the World Sustainable Development Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 2012. In the final report of the summit, which is called Rio+20 (regarding the UN Conference on Environment and Development held in the same city in 1992), issues such as sustainable development being human-oriented, adopting a more inclusive approach including youth and children, gender equality, empowering women's participation in economic and political life, and promoting social inclusion came to the fore. The report highlighted the usage of information and communication technologies on sustainable development, informing society, sharing experiences openly and transparently, and accelerating the information flow between the government and the public. The significant role of information and communication technologies has been emphasized to ensure the effective participation of civil society in sustainable development (United Nations 2012). Sustainable development generally focuses on equitable economic and social development, poverty prevention, management of the environment and natural resources, democracy, governance, and human rights (Oktuğ Zengin 2014: 6209).

Although the reports mentioned don't discuss sustainability for media itself, they are valuable for regarding such dimensions as social equality and participation as the components of sustainable development. Sustainability for media refers to the creation of a sustainable structure for itself, which can be summarised as the survival of media organisations, the provision of sufficient incomes for journalists and all employees, the creation of suitable and alternative channels for readers, and the provision to reliable and uninterrupted news flow. The concept of sustainable journalism constitutes the theoretical framework of this research in terms of not only focusing on new media environments and having the potential to produce solutions to the crises experienced by traditional journalism.

It is a fact that news organisations today have difficulty making ends meet with traditional advertising and sales revenues. Social media platforms have become important competitors for news tracking and advertising. It is observed that young readers especially follow social media platforms (non-news organisations) for news consumption, although their reliability is debatable, or they avoid the news. In the face of traditional journalism crises, creating new income models and journalism forms using digital platforms for sustainable journalism is needed.

All these developments point to the necessity of a value creation perspective centred on the consumer/reader for sustainable journalism. Pavlik draws attention to the four components of sustainable journalism: "creating and delivering quality news content, engaging the public in an interactive news discourse, using new digitally networked news methods, developing new forms of governance, and creating digital networked strategies" (2013: 183). These

components also point to strategies that create value for the reader. The value creation perspective asserts that value is in the consumer's mind and is a measure of worth or importance placed on a product or service.

Audiences spend less time and money on news than in the past, and this affects advertising revenues. The amount of news the public desires and how it is consumed has and continues to vary widely. However, there is a clear collective decline in news consumption, and news organisations' roles in society are changing (Picard, 2006: 3).

Consumer value perception can be defined as "what is obtained as a result of using or experiencing the product" or "the judgment that emerges as a result of comparing the product performance with the costs of obtaining it" (Oliver, 1997: 28). Product features, acquisition process, its experience and cost shape the consumer's perception of value (Kothari and Lackner 2006). Consumer value perception is affected by cultural and individual values. For this reason, it is necessary to analyse all these factors directly to understand consumer expectations. In the 21. century, companies have turned to consumer-centred instead of firm/institution-centred value creation processes. (Güneş, 2011: 75).

On the other hand, media organisations are not only commercial enterprises but also one of the main tools of news flow and democratic participation. The two-sided market model does not capture how media organisations are both commercial operations and knowledge-producing institutions that create value for society (Olsen, 2021: 811). The relationship between economic and societal value creation is complex and contradicting (Picard 2010). "News organizations produce intrinsic and instrumental value, furthering the pursuit of truth, knowledge, self-identity, and democratic participation. Those values, however, do not necessary translate into exchange value, which is determined separately in the marketplace" (Picardi, 2006: 3). This value problem is one of the crucial challenges for news organisations today. A revenue model for news that combines subsidies and user payment with some advertising revenue can potentially provide a viable path for local, hyperlocal and community journalism (Olsen, Pickard, and Westlund 2020; Olsen 2021).

The debate on sustainable journalism in the UK focuses heavily on the quality of news content and subscription revenue gained from content that meets the reader's expectations. It can be said that the reader attrition and the crisis experienced by the media, in general, are global. Despite its deep-rooted journalism background, the United Kingdom is also among the countries affected by this crisis. Changes in the media landscape in the last 25 years have confronted the British media with various challenges. Many of them have been losing their readers, and this mainly has been affecting small and independent local media. "The rise of the internet and social media has led to a profound change in how (local) news and information is produced and consumed... The loss of print sales revenue and online advertising has brought successive shocks to the local news business model. It has led to multiple title closures, redundancies, the hollowing out of newsrooms, office closures, and centralisation" (Barclay et al., 2022: 7). One of the significant ways to cope with this crisis is to gain regular readers incomes by regaining the readers who go to social media.

The revenue models for sustainable journalism are reader revenues (subscription, membership, sales); advertising, sponsored content, and advertorials; grant programs and crowdfunding programs. Crowdfunding programs can be defined as the financing of a newspaper or journalistic activity by a group of people via the Internet (Uzunoğlu and Uyar, 2021: 18). This funding can be based on one-time donations, or it can be carried out in the

form of regular donations. It is thought that generating income from subscriptions, membership, and sales is the most permanent income among these models.

Subscription revenues can be evaluated as "... that point that everyone wants to reach". "Subscription and membership models that generate income from readers are becoming increasingly significant for the sustainability of digital journalism" (Uzunoğlu and Uyar, 2021: 18). Reader-focused income models are also a crucial element of journalism that is not dependent on income from advertising and funds. Research on the reader's news consumption habits is considered very significant in terms of developing sustainable journalism models. It is necessary to create value for the reader for the legacy media to cope with the crisis and for the new entrepreneurial journalism practices that emerged from this crisis (Singer, 2018). As Picardi (2010) pointed out journalism and news organisations are at a decisive point in their existence. Those who choose to change and increase value for their stakeholders will have a future; those who continue their current paths will wither.

2. Research Methodology

The survey method was used in this research. In this part of the article, the survey data conducted in England (London) and Wales (Cardiff) in the United Kingdom will be analysed to understand the changing news consumption habits. The survey has been conducted with 200 participants in London and Cardiff –including Turkish audiences - to determine their news consumption habits. The survey tries to find answers to these main questions:

- The frequency of news follow-up,
- The preference rates of printed newspapers and digital platforms,
- The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the news consumption habits,
- The most preferred media outlets/channels and their reasons for preferring them.
- The effect of the age variable on these factors.

The convenience sampling technique was used in this research. Convenience sampling is one of the non-probability sampling techniques and a way of selecting participants from the target population based on ease of access (Golzar, Noor and Tajik, 2022). The survey does not claim to represent a wide universe such as the readership in the UK. It is aimed to make inferences through the reader behaviour of a section of readership. Care was taken to include different age groups in the sample selection, and the research questioned whether the age factor was a significant variable in the reader's news consumption habit. The effect of the age variable on various options was tried to be revealed through correlation analysis.

Since the research is part of a large-scale study on news consumption habits in the context of sustainable journalism, care was taken to include different identities and educational levels, too. However, within the scope of this article, no deep inquiry is made regarding the variables of ethnic affiliation and education.

The survey was conducted online and face-to-face. The researcher shared the survey via email and social media groups in Google Forms. Some questionnaires were filled out face-to-face to reach different age groups and sufficient participants. The questionnaire primarily includes questions about demographic characteristics. Then, to reveal participants' attitudes and behaviours about news consumption, it was used question phrases and the 5-point Likert scale. The participants were asked to mark their agreement levels with the attitudes listed. The questionnaire also includes open-ended questions to collect descriptive data. Participants

were asked open-ended questions about their most preferred media outlets and their reasons. Responses to open-ended questions were classified through thematic analysis.

2. Finding of Research

200 participants were equally from England (London) and Wales (Cardiff). While the male and female participants ratios are close to each other, the rate of participants who do not want to specify their gender is 1.5%. Looking at the age range, the highest number of participants is between the ages of 26-40, with 47%. The rate of participants aged 41-55 age is 22%, those aged 56-65 over is 14% and the participants aged 18- 25 is 17%. The researcher experienced some difficulties in accessing the younger and older generation participants. Some refused to participate in the survey, saying they did not follow the media, and some did not want to fill out the online form. The highest rates of educational levels of the participants are bachelor's degree (37.5%), master's degree (25.5%), and Sixth Form/high school (24%). The high level of education in the country and the fact that the researcher was mostly able to reach this group are effective in the high level of education of the participants. These can be considered as the limitations of the research. The survey findings will be discussed with subtitles parallel to the listed questions above.

2.1. News Consumption Habits

The findings about the participants' news consumption habits are summarised below. Approximately 60% of the participants update the news 2-3 times a day or more frequently. Most participants watch or read the news "lots of times throughout the day" (%36). The "2-3 times a day" option is second (%27), and "once a day" is in third place (%15.5). 64.7% of participants in the 18-25 age range selected the first two options. The rate of those who selected the "One time or less a week" option is 9%.

Participants were asked to mark three news categories they primarily followed. In this question, the "UK news" and "Breaking news..." categories are the first two among the most preferred news categories, with rates over 50%. The "Foreign/International issues" classy ranks third with 45.5%. The option "your home country/city" is marked 42.5%. 80% of those who selected this option do not identify as British, English or Welsh. This can be interpreted as ethnic affiliations maintaining their ties with their homeland through the news. In a more general sense, they are more interested in news that is familiar/close to them. The preference rate for local news is also 42.5%.

According to the findings, while "online news sites" are the most preferred media platforms, the print newspaper is the least preferred legacy media for news consumption. 54% of the respondents selected the "online news sites" option as the most preferred media platform. This rate is followed by "TV news" with 16.5% and "print newspaper's social media accounts" options with 13%. Notably, the rate of those who prefer the "print newspaper" option is 4.5% and those who prefer "papers' social media accounts" is 13%. Although some readers have moved away from the papers, it can be said that they maintain their loyalty to these media brands.

While none of the participants 18-25 preferred print newspapers, approximately %18 of them preferred print newspapers' social media accounts. The rate of participants over 55 who prefer printed newspapers is 77%. In addition, approximately half of these participants answered the question regarding social media platforms "I don't use social media for news".

Table 1. The most preferred social media platforms

11- Please mark your most preferred social media platform for news updates. (Select one).	
Social Media	Rate (%)
Twitter	30,5
Facebook	24,5
Instagram	18
I don't use social media for news	16
Reddit	3.5
TikTok	3
Messaging Apps	2.5
Linked-in	1

It is seen that the most preferred social media platform by the participants for updating the news is Twitter (30.5%). Facebook is second rank with 24.5%, and Instagram is third rank with 18%. It is seen that 67.2% of those who prefer Twitter are between the ages of 18 and 40 among the whole participants. 32% of the participants between the ages of 18-40 stated that they preferred Twitter, 25% Instagram, and 9.3% preferred platforms such as Reddit, TikTok and Snapchat.

Although albeit at low rates, it is noteworthy that TikTok and Reddit are among the social media platforms preferred by young participants. Messaging apps like WhatsApp are also among the platforms that follow the news with a rate of 2.5%. However, 16% of the participants marked the "I don't use social media for news" option. It is seen that approximately 44% of those who selected this option marked the "online news sites" option in the previous question. It shows that even though some readers do not prefer social media platforms, they follow news on digital platforms.

2.2. Changing News Consumption During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Participants were given 12 statements to measure how changed their news consumption habits during the COVID-19 pandemic, and they were asked to mark their level of agreement.

This question group tried to reveal behaviours such as whether there is an increase in the news following during the Pandemic, which news types and platforms they prefer, and their level of purchasing printed newspapers. Although the research is not a longitudinal study, the participants were asked in the questionnaire how their news consumption habits changed during the Pandemic. Based on the answers to these questions, inferences were made regarding "change".

12- Please tick the most appropriate statements below regarding your news consumption habits during the COVID-19 pandemic. (Please respond by considering your behaviour, especially during periods of intense restrictions)

Statements	Disagree % (Strongly disagree + Agree)	Undecided %	Agree % (Strongly agree + Agree)
I have started following the local news (about my city and town) more	23.5	11.5	65
I have followed more news than I used to	24	8.5	67.5
I've bought less printed newspapers than previously	30	15.5	54.5
I've followed the news about health more than previously	20.5	10.5	69
There was no change in my news consumption habit	64	17.5	18.5
I used more online news applications than I used to	32	11	57
I discovered new news sources	32	20.5	47.5
I followed more news on social media	23.5	10.5	66
I followed more news on TV	37	19	44
There has been an increase in the time that I spend following news on the radio	56	19.5	24.5
There has been an increase in my use of all media platforms	32	21	47

Figure 1. News consumption habits during the Covid-19 pandemic

One of the most striking findings is the significant increase in the news consumption time of the participants during the Pandemic with a rate of 67.5%. The rate of those who agree with the statement "I have followed more news than I used to" is 48.5%, and those who tick "strongly agree" is 19%.

There is also a significant increase in local news consumption. The percentage of participants who agree and strongly agree with the statement "I have started following the local news (about my city and town) more" is 65%. Those who tick the agree option are 53%, and those who say "strongly agree" are 12%.

It could be said that people preferred to follow local news to receive information about how the Pandemic affected their habitat. This change can be interpreted as the reader strengthening their local belongings and attaching more importance to local news in times of crisis. Although the preference rate for local news is high, the subscription rate to local news outlets is low. The rate of those who agree with the statement "I subscribe to local news sites" is only 29%. More than 30% of the participants who stated that they follow more local news said they do not subscribe to local news sites. This can be interpreted as the increase in news following does not always bring the reader income and that other factors are needed to encourage readers to subscribe.

While the Pandemic caused a serious decline in print newspaper sales, news consumption on online platforms increased significantly. More than 70% of the participants stated that their purchasing of printed newspapers rate has decreased. Only 20.5% of the participants scored the "disagree" option to this statement. However, the answer to this question should be evaluated with the answers to the question about the most preferred media platforms. The rate of the participants who prefer printed newspapers was only 4.5%. Some of those who stated that there was no decrease in the purchase rate of printed newspapers are people who already do not follow printed newspapers.

On the other hand, the rate of those who use more online news applications is 38.5%, and the rate of "discovered new news sources" is 47.5%. No significant differences according to age in these answers were observed. It is seen that seeking reliable news leads people to digital news platforms that are faster updated and easily accessible. In addition, it can be said that the contradictory news about the Pandemic in traditional media pushes the reader to search for different news sources. During the COVID-19 pandemic, people's news consumption on social media channels increased. The percentage of the respondents who "agree" with this phrase

is %43, and “strongly agree” with %23 (%66 in total). On the other hand, the rate of “disagreement” with this state is %32 in total.

2.3. Main Sources for News and Its Reasons

The questionnaire also includes three open-ended questions about the most preferred national and local media outlets and the reason(s) why they preferred them. BBC England and BBC Wales are among the most repeated media channels in the answers. This result parallels the findings of Ofcom's annual "News Consumption in the UK" survey (Ofcom, 2022). Sky News and ITV News follow BBC channels. CNN and Al-Jazira are also TV channels where the participants write their names. Daily Mail, The Times, The Guardian, The Independent, and The Mirror are among the mainstream newspapers that appear in the responses. The Telegraph, South Wales Argus, Hackney Gazette, Evening Standard, and Olay Newspaper (a Turkish newspaper in London) are among the participants' preferred local newspapers.

Among the responses, Turkish television channels such as Habertürk, TRT, CCN Türk, BBC Türk and newspapers such as Sözcü and Hürriyet draw attention. It is seen that Turkish respondents follow the broadcasts from Turkey as well as the British media.

Although they do not do journalism in the traditional sense, social media applications such as Reddit, Nextdoor, and Eventbrite are among the channels the participants prefer to follow local news. While Reddit and Nextdoor are preferred especially by young participants, Eventbrite, a platform where events are announced, seems to appeal to a wider age group. It is also remarkable that Facebook groups are considered news sources by some of the participants.

The most important reason the participants prefer a media outlet is “credibility/reliability”. Most participants stated that their main expectation from a news outlet is reliability. “Easy to follow and access”, “quick access”, “clear and easier to understand”, “regular/fast updates”, “rich content and few adverts”, and “balance and equality” are among the other main reasons for preference.

Participants use words such as “Trusted”, “Reliable”, “I can trust them”, “trustworthiness and credibility”, “Reliable/credible information; no adverts”, “More accurate”, “I trust it”, “Because it is trustworthy”, “I find them more trustful and rich in terms of content”, “Reliability, “impartiality, few adverts”, “Because of more truth and no ads” to express the factor of trust.

Some of the participants find traditional mainstream media outlets reliable, while others find them unreliable. Traditional mainstream media outlets are cited, with credibility often equated with the magnitude and prevalence of the media outlet. Some participants think the media organisation is reliable because it is well-established and prominent. Some of the expressions that reveal this idea are as follows: “well-known sources”, “big companies”, “most of the people use”, “popular”, and “I trust public services (for BBC) more than private news.”

It is seen that young participants prefer social media platforms since they think that they are more reliable. Some of them stated that they find social media platforms reliable and free from censorship, unlike mainstream media outlets. For example, a participant who prefers Telegram for local news consumption says, “Telegram uncensored, and I read what I want to read without manipulation or censoring”. Similarly, some participants used phrases such as

“(Nextdoor) is trustable”, “I am Reditter”, and “we can learn what happens in the world, easier on social media” ...

The reasons why readers prefer local media outlets include “ease of follow and access”, “being easy to understand”, “being limited to local news”, and “being fast and up to date”. The participants expressed their preference for ease of follow and access with the following statements: “Easy to follow /reach”, “easily available”, “availability”, “available for free”, “easy to access and trustworthy”, “quick to access”, “quick and easy” ...

Readers want to access the necessary information in the shortest and fastest way. They prefer to avoid exposure to traditional news discourse, which is both lengthy and oblique, as in television newscasts, and so many stories that may or may not interest them. One participant expresses this in the following words: “It’s easier than sitting in front of the TV or radio to listen to what is new. Online I can find it quickly and directly.”

Those are the other responses that stated ease of reading: “clear and easier to understand”, “It’s short, sharp and to the point. Easy to follow and feel that it is reliable”, “easy to read”, “I am finding easy to read and follow” ...

Some of the answers that indicate speed and quick updates as reasons for preferring the news source are as follows: “Fast and reliable”, “up to the minutes’ news”, “easy to catch up and follow the news”, “regular updates, habit”, “It provides reliable and updated news”.

The survey reveals what readers do not want to experience as much as what they want to see on news platforms. Respondents complained about click baits and exposure to too many advertisements in news content. Some of the expressions used by those who prefer fewer ads are as follows: “credible information; no adverts”, “fairly relevant, not full of adverts/clickbait”, “because more truth and no ads”, “no adverts on BBC”, “credible and no adverts”, “less adverts” ... It is notable that respondents associate fewer ads with credibility. Encountering too many advertisements while reading the news is seen as a factor that reduces the reliability of the news outlets and content.

Balance/equality and diversity inclusion are among the features that readers expect from a media organisation. As in the response below, some respondents strongly expressed that the mainstream media was insufficient to represent differences: “I feel all of these platforms have a level of corruption, and the way they share stories has racial bias”. Some readers prefer to follow different news outlets to keep the balance. One participant explains the reason for following both the BBC and Guardian: “The news network of BBC is wide. The Guardian is on the oppositional side, and because I believe I can be informed about the issues more partially”.

Conclusion and Discussion

The survey, conducted with a limited sample using convenience sampling, gives an idea about the readers' news consumption habits and expectations. Although the results are evaluated within the limitations of the research, they will be discussed with similar studies in the literature.

Approximately 60% of the participants update the news 2-3 times a day or more frequently. This rate increases to approximately 65% for participants 18-25 age. Although some young people in this age group refused to participate in the survey, stating that they did not follow the news, a significant part of the participants had the habit of getting news from different

channels. On the other hand, the rate of those who selected the “One time or less a week” option is 9%.

It is seen that the readers prioritise local ties and news that they think represent themselves. Turkish newspapers and TV channels are among the most preferred media outlets by Turkish participants can be considered one of the indicators of this result. The central view of the traditional news approach no longer meets the reader's expectations. The "personalised content" expectation, which we can define as one of the benefits of digitalisation, is also valid for news consumption.

This study observed that the rate of those who preferred printed newspapers was significantly low, and their purchasing rates decreased during the Pandemic. It is seen that people's need for news and the time they allocate to news consumption have also increased during the Pandemic. Participants also stated that there was an increase in their following of local news. The Pandemic did not initiate the preference for digital platforms and social media as news sources, but it increased during this period. The findings similarly indicate a significant increase in the rates of following digital news platforms and local news consumption during the Pandemic with other research (see Newman, 2022; Kima, Wangb and Malthouse, 2021).

On the other hand, it is also noteworthy that social media platforms are preferred for following news. The most preferred social media platform by the participants for updating the news is Twitter (30.5%). Facebook is the second rank with 24.5 %.

The perceived reliability of media organisations is significant for the reader's choice. While some respondents found large/rooted traditional media outlets trustworthy, that trust has eroded for many participants. It is seen that independent news applications on social media are increasingly preferred.

Another reason to prefer social media platforms is accessibility. Accessibility means in terms of both technical ease-used and readability of the news. Non-news organisations such as Telegram, Nextdoor, Eventbrite, Reddit and Facebook groups are among the preferred platforms for news tracking. Especially young participants prefer platforms such as Reddit and Nextdoor. These findings show that the impact of non-media organisations on news-following habits is one of the new research fields in journalism studies and the marketplace.

Although readers followed more national and local news, especially during the Pandemic, this increase was not observed in subscription revenues at the same rate. In this study, no findings are revealing the reasons for this situation. It is thought that further studies discussing the reasons that will encourage readers to subscribe to news sites will be enlightening. However, Picardi's predictions about how media can create value for readers in the 21st century may be helpful to evaluate this finding. Brenier (2019) emphasises the following among the value creation strategies for the reader listed by Picardi (2010); “Only by being distinct can one achieve higher value and profit”, “emphasise news and journalism rather than entertainment and ‘soft’ topics”, “content must be specialised geographically or thematically, and of high quality”, “reduce the flow of information into a manageable form”, “add value to news and information by processing it”, “increase value for society by covering issues that matter to users”...

The survey reveals that reader expectations of news are reliable, rich, and personalised content, accessibility, readability, and exposure to fewer advertisements. Media outlets are moving away from meeting the expectations of today's readers by giving priority to instant

digital traffic, advertisements and ubiquitous routine or soft news. Such content, while low cost, does not appear to be sustainable. “If all media are covering the same major news events—the latest natural disasters, lurid murders, tweets by political operatives—users can get it free somewhere else. Why pay?” (Brenier, 2019). “The essential issue is making the news and information content important and useful to audiences so that they perceive material from news organizations as more vital and valuable than the brief overview and bits and pieces provided by non-news organisations” (Picardi, 2020:109).

This study tried to present results based on the survey conducted in the United Kingdom. Although factors such as income and education level were neglected in this research, they are highly effective in news consumption habits. Further and larger studies that take different variables into account are needed.

Today, news avoidance is one of the important problems for the journalism market. Reuters Institute's 2023 Digital News Report states that "the proportion of news consumers who say they avoid news, often or sometimes, remains close to all-time highs at 36% across markets". The report is based on a survey of over 93,000 online news consumers in 46 markets covering half of the world's population.

The reasons for avoiding the news are also one of the issues that this study does not discuss in detail. The issues such as the expectations of young readers and the reasons for the shift from legacy media to peripheral actors need to be investigated by different dimensions.

In Turkey, there are a limited number of studies on news consumption habits. Increasing the research on news consumption is significant in discussing sustainable journalism in Turkey. As Şirvanlı (2022) points out, evaluations made for Turkey through the media atmospheres of different countries will be incomplete. In the context of sustainable journalism, studies on news consumption habits in Turkey should also consider factors such as the media atmosphere, freedom of the press, regulatory laws, and social/cultural variables of the country.

It should be noted that for sustainable journalism, there is a need to provide content that the reader finds worth paying for. Journalism in the digital age is more than using technology and diversified platforms effectively. Understanding society, analysing developments, and presenting reliable and functional news to audiences are the requirements of sustainable journalism.

Declarations

* *Approval of Institutional Review Board (IRB)*: Ethical approval was received on 9th February 2022 with the numbered decision 21/22JOMEC006 from the Cardiff University School of Journalism Media and Culture (JOMEC) Research Committee.

* *Conflict of Interest*: Not applicable.

* *Funding*: TÜBİTAK supported the study within the scope of the postdoctoral research project titled “Local Press and Digital Transformation in The Context of Sustainable Journalism; A Roadmap from The Example of Britain. (Project number is 1059B192000856).

* *Acknowledgements*: The first version of this study was presented as an oral presentation at the Uskudar University 10th International Communication Days Digital Capitalism Communication Symposium held on 16-18 May 20223, and the abstract was published in the symposium abstract booklet.

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