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## Emerging Consumption Patterns among Young People of Traditional and Internet News Platforms in the Low Countries

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### Abstract

In search of a better understanding of young people's news media consumption in a European high-media environment, this study analysed the role of uses and gratifications motivations in driving time spent with television news, newspapers, and online news sites, while controlling for the effects of possible influential socio-demographics. Our findings confirmed that the need to get information about the world or one's environment is the strongest uses and gratifications predictor for time spent on television news, newspapers, and online news sites. Nevertheless, young people's news consumption is also driven by 'diversion' needs. Especially television news, which young people also watch to escape from the daily routine or to be entertained. One of the conclusions we can draw from these results is that traditional and online news platforms, although serving some needs that are mutually exclusive, overall are being consulted in search of the same gratifications, respectively information/surveillance and diversion gratifications. Nevertheless, the use of online news was not found to diminish the use of traditional news platforms. On the contrary, we found that the use of television news enhanced the use of online news and vice versa. These findings confirm young people's complementary use of traditional and online news platforms.

**Keywords:** News media consumption, young people, uses and gratifications, the Low Countries.

### Introduction

Research highlighting uses of traditional and online media platforms for news consumption provides evidence for the assumption that traditional news media are losing their luster among youngsters and young adults. Using data from the European Social Survey 2004/05 covering 24 European nations, Elvestad & Blekesaune (2008) found individual-level characteristics to explain most of the variation in newspaper reading, compared to national characteristics such as newspapers' situation, other demographic factors (for example unemployment rate), media systems (for example polarized, pluralist, democratic corporatist, or liberal). More concretely, in Northern European or democratic corporatist countries age turns out to be an important determinant: the older one gets, the more time one spends on reading newspapers. This confirms a European cross-national analysis based on the Eurobarometer public opinion survey, which found age and birth cohort<sup>1</sup> effects to be the most powerful discriminating variables between daily and non-daily reading in the countries under study, leading to the conclusion that "it does not matter what the

<sup>1</sup> A birth cohort is a group of people born within the same period (for example a time span of nine years) who share similar social and cultural influences.

newspaper market provides them with primarily – tabloids, prestige press or regional newspapers – young people do not read daily about politics anyway” (Lauf, 2001). Peiser (2000) refers in this respect to a cohort replacement effect: increasing numbers of younger people seem to read less frequently as opposed to a decreasing number of older people who read more frequently. Analysing the frequency of newspaper reading in both the U.S. and Germany over a time span of 25 years, Peiser found cohort replacement to make a substantial contribution to the gradual decline in newspaper reading. In sum, we can conclude that the decline in newspaper reading is mainly due to a combination of both age and cohort effects with each new generation reading less than the previous generation, but with an increasing readership within each generation as it ages (Lauf, 2001).

To get a clear picture of recent television news viewing trends among young people, we have to turn to American figures due to a lack of recent comparable data monitoring television news viewership over time across Europe. Although television news, once referred to as “the main source” (Robinson, 1986), still remains the most prominent news source with 70% of American adults stating they get most of their national and international news from television, compared to 40% from the internet and 35% from newspapers<sup>2</sup>, a twofold trend appears when analysing these data across time: we witness a downward trend for newspapers and television news, respectively from 50% and 80% in 2003 to 35% and 70% in 2008, in contrast with an upward trend for online news from 20% in 2003 up to 40% in 2008 (Pew Internet, 2008). Furthermore, when focusing on Americans under 30, internet rivals television as main news source by the end of 2008: nearly 60% state they get most of their national and international news online (up from 34% in 2007), an identical percentage cites television news (down from 86% in 2007) (Pew Internet, 2008). A recent 2008 survey among 1,000 young people (15-29 years) in the Netherlands, found, however, television to remain the medium most time is spent with for news (a daily average of 36 minutes). But in line with American survey findings, online news sites turn out to be the news platforms with the highest increase in use: half of the respondents said their use of online sites for news had increased over the past two years (Drok & Schwartz, 2009).

Such shifts from traditional to online media platforms among young news consumers can be better understood when taking into account recent technological evolutions resulting in today’s high-tech environment, and youngsters’ changing lifestyles. Although young people do consider it important to keep up with current events, they tend to find the ways in which traditional media offer these events hardly appealing (Costera Meijer, 2007; Raeymakers, 2003; Beekhoven & Van Wel 1998; Huang, 2009). For them, news is not an end in itself but a means for experiencing the world around them: i.e. monitoring their environment, giving meaning to their lives, identifying personal values for truth, getting a sense of

<sup>2</sup> Figures add to more than 100% because multiple answers were allowed.

belonging, for conversation and inspiration (Costera Meijer, 2007; Huang, 2009). Growing up in the "DotNet" generation (Zukin, 2006) with news made accessible through an array of offline and online media platforms, young people have become news grazers, combining different platforms and multiple online news sources and selecting the bits of news they deem necessary to gratify their needs (The State of the News Media, 2010). Such increased use of digital news platforms illustrates the demand for self-selected, custom-made information, with each individual deciding what news or information should be made available at what moment in time (Althaus & Tewksbury, 2000; Costera Meijer, 2007; Huang, 2009). This new orientation towards news reflects the hasty lifestyle of the young, combining education, jobs, social networking, hobbies, etc. within a limited time frame (Costera Meijer, 2007; Huang, 2009).

These emerging online news consumption patterns by which people have more control over their news selection hereby easily avoiding 'not interesting' news, bear the risk of creating knowledge gaps (Tewksbury & Althaus, 2000; Tewksbury, 2003; Schoenbach et al., 2005) and to a further extent, of disabling a shared public sphere due to the creation of fragmented audiences (Tewksbury, 2005). Overall, research evidence on the relationship between traditional and online news media use, however, tends to suggest that internet so far has supplemented rather than substituted traditional media for news use (De Waal, Schönbach & Lauf, 2005; Althaus & Tewksbury, 2000; Dutta-Bergman, 2004; Flavian & Gurrea, 2009; Diddi & LaRose, 2006). Nevertheless, as stated before, for some audience groups, especially the younger ones, new media seem to gratify their needs in a better way, thereby gradually taking over functions of the traditional media (e.g., De Waal et al., 2005).

### **Theoretical framework**

At the core of studies analysing media adoption and use is the basic idea of the uses & gratifications tradition, which states that people make an active and goal directed choice between the different media that surround them, based on their needs and the different gratifications these media provide them with. This theory tries to explain why individuals choose to attend particular media by looking at the gratifications they expect and gain from these interactions (e.g. Katz et al., 1974; Rosengren, 1974; Palmgreen & Rayburn, 1979; Levy & Windhal, 1984; Rubin, 1994). As individuals are provided with limited amounts of time and budget, they have to choose between the different media platforms they are surrounded with by determining which one would better satisfy their particular needs (e.g. McCombs & Nolan, 1992; Dimmick et al., 2006; Kayany & Jelsma, 2000). Hence, when a new medium such as internet serves needs better compared to how the traditional media do, this new medium could be seen as a functional alternative with audiences drifting away from the traditional platforms. As argued by Althaus and Tewksbury (2000): "At

some point in the not-too-distant future, the choice between new and traditional media will depend more on how well these technologies satisfy particular interests and needs of individual consumers than on the current social distribution of necessary equipment and skills".

Overall, uses and gratifications studies analysing gratifications for news use identified the *information seeking* or *surveillance* (e.g. to get information about one's community, environment, political affairs, etc.) and the *social utility* gratification (e.g. to acquire information for conversation) as one of the most relevant factors in understanding news consumption (Eveland et al., 2003; Rubin, 1984; Katz et al., 1973; Rubin & Perse, 1987; Rayburn et al., 1984). This was also the case when looking at young people's news media use across different media platforms (Vincent & Basil, 1997; Diddi & LaRose, 2006). In their study of news media use among college students, Vincent and Basil (1997) found that higher surveillance needs resulted in more use of newspapers, news magazines and television news. Similarly, Diddi & LaRose investigated whether significant positive relations could be found between patterns of news consumption among young people and different needs (2006). Surveillance showed a significant positive relation with four patterns of news consumption: the use of cable TV, broadcast, Internet, and newspapers. Escapism (e.g. looking to escape from routines or aiming at emotional release) however also turned out to be a consistent predictor for news consumption across these platforms. Furthermore, Diddi & LaRose found internet news forms not only to correlate positively with surveillance and escapism but also with entertainment gratifications. The importance of entertainment and escape, also referred to as "secondary or tertiary gratifications" (Althaus & Tewksbury, 2000) in young people's news consumption, was confirmed in Vincent & Basil's (1997) study, which found entertainment needs to result in television news viewing in general and CNN viewing in particular. In addition, Althaus & Tewksbury (2000) examined patterns of internet and traditional news media use in a networked college community. Overall their study showed members of this community to perceive the World Wide Web primarily as an entertainment medium and only secondarily as a news medium; passing time was rated as the most likely use of this medium. But respondents who use the Web most frequently said they find it at least comparable and perhaps even superior to traditional news media. Due to a lack of European studies examining young people's news media use from a uses and gratifications perspective, this study will, in search of a better understanding of young people's current news media use in a *European* high-tech environment, analyse the steering role of uses & gratifications motivations for news consumption of youngsters and young adults (15 up to 34 years) across online (online news site) and offline (printed newspaper and television news) media platforms. In line with previous uses and gratifications research examining young people's news consumption across online and offline media platforms (Vincent & Basil, 1997; Diddi & LaRose, 2006, Althaus & Tewksbury, 2000), the following hypotheses are formulated:

H1: The information/surveillance gratification will be the strongest predictor of time spent with printed newspapers, television news, and online news sites.

H2: An increase in diversion needs (entertainment, escape, pastime) will result in an increase in time spent with printed newspapers, television news, and online news sites.

Given their limited resources, individuals have to choose between media that serve similar needs (e.g. Dimmick et al., 2004). Moreover, frequent users of the Web find it at least comparable and perhaps even superior to traditional news media (Althaus & Tewksbury, 2000). In light of the above we expect the following relations between the news use of traditional and online media:

H3: Time spent on online news will be negatively related to time spent on printed newspapers.

H4: Time spent on online news will be negatively related to time spent on television news

## **Method**

### ***Sample and Procedure***

Data for this study were collected by means of a cross-national survey conducted in 2009 among 1,193 youngsters and young adults (aged 15 up to 34) (52% from Flanders, 48% from the Netherlands). We used a disproportionate quota sampling method to control for an approximately equal distribution of gender and education across different age categories (15-18, 19-24, 25-29, and 30-34 years). For the age categories above 18 years, a distinction was made between secondary education (labelled 'low educated') and higher education (labelled 'high educated') as the highest educational level followed. For the 15-18 year-olds we differentiated between secondary education leading up to a profession (labelled 'low educated') and secondary education preparing for higher education (labelled 'high educated') as the highest educational level followed. The sample distribution for education by age can be seen in Table 1. An approximately equal distribution of gender across the age/education conditions was accounted for. Overall the sample consisted of 51% female and 49% male respondents of which 25% is between 15-18 years, 29% between 19-24, 23% between 25-29, and 23% between 30-34 years.

**Table 1.** Sample distribution of education by age

Age	High educated		Low educated	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
15-18	126	44.4	158	55.6
19-24	169	50.0	169	50.0
25-29	114	42.7	153	57.3
30-34	114	44.4	143	55.6
<i>Total</i>	523	45.6	623	54.4

Note. 47 cases were excluded due to missing values for education.

The survey was conducted during Spring 2009 and consisted of a self-administered questionnaire about media use, news media use, motivations for using specific news media, attitudes towards news and news media, and socio-demographic characteristics. It took approximately 25 to 30 minutes to fill in the questionnaire. By way of a hand delivered distribution in the largest Flemish and Dutch cities, respondents were asked to fill in the questionnaire at home and sent it back afterwards. Additionally, in an effort to fill the missing gaps in the quota sample, companies and schools were contacted and an extra 248 questionnaires were collected online.

### ***Dependent and Independent Variables***

*Uses and gratifications measures.* Based on previous uses and gratifications measures (Rubin & Perse, 1987; Palmgreen et al., 1980; McLeod et al., 1965; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000) five gratifications for using news media were measured: entertainment, information/surveillance, social utility, pastime and escape. This was done separately for television news, newspaper, and online news by asking individuals to indicate on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (totally not agree) to 5 (totally agree) to what extent they agree with the uses and gratifications items for watching television news, reading a newspaper, consulting news on the Internet<sup>3</sup>. An exploratory factor analysis using principal axis factoring extraction with oblique rotation was conducted for the three news media platforms separately, as can be seen in Table 2. Items with loadings below .20 and items with cross loadings higher than .30 were excluded from the analysis. This resulted in five factors, with consistent and comparable patterns across the three news media, explaining 60% of the variance for television news, 62% for newspaper, and 65% for online news.

<sup>3</sup> Respondents who never consult a medium for news were asked to skip the question. For television news *n* = 1,064, for newspaper *n* = 957, for online news *n* = 782.

Five multi-item scales were composed for each news platform by averaging the scores on the individual items in each factor. To assess the internal consistency of the uses and gratifications measures, we used Cronbach's alphas. The alpha values for the uses and gratifications measures for television news ranged from .79 to .82, for newspaper from .81 to .85, and for online news from .82 to .85. Correlations between the sum scales and the factor scores for the uses and gratifications measures for television news ranged from  $r = .94$  ( $p < .01$ ) to  $r = .99$  ( $p < .01$ ), for newspaper from  $r = .97$  ( $p < .01$ ) to  $r = .99$  ( $p < .01$ ), and for online news from  $r = .94$  ( $p < .01$ ) to  $r = .98$  ( $p < .01$ ).

*Control Variables.* Socio-demographic variables that serve as control variables in our analyses are gender, age, and education. Previous research identified these variables to have a significant effect on news media use, with men, older, and higher educated individuals consuming more news (e.g. Lauf, 2001; Elvestad & Blekesaune, 2008; Vincent & Basil, 1997; Dutta-Bergman, 2004).

*Time spent using various media and news media.* To measure time spent on news using printed newspaper (free newspapers not included), television news, and online news sites (i.e. news sites linked to traditional news platforms as well as news-gathering sites) individuals were asked to indicate for each news medium how much time (in hours and minutes) on average a day they spend *consulting news* with a specific news medium. This method was repeated to measure the *overall time* spent with television and internet. All variables measuring time spent were afterwards transformed into minutes.



**Table 2.** Factor loadings from the pattern matrix for uses and gratifications measures for three news platforms, using a principal axis factoring extraction with oblique rotation.

Uses and gratifications measures	Television news	Newspaper	Online news site
<b>Entertainment</b>			
Because it entertains me	.82	.85	.87
Because it relaxes me	.79	.79	.78
Because I find it exciting	.64	.50	.55
<b>Information/ surveillance</b>			
To keep up with the most important things that happen in the world	.90	.86	.82
To stay informed about a range of topics	.84	.86	.88
To keep up with what happens in my environment (city, country,...)	.59	.66	.66
<b>Social utility</b>			
To have something to talk about with others	.75	.70	.65
To get facts that support my ideas for when I am in a discussion with others	.74	.74	.73
Because my environment (parents, friends, colleagues) expect this from me	.66	.65	.61
Because it is helpful for my carrier or education	.65	.64	.66
Because it helps me to decide how to vote	.57	.64	.64
<b>Pastime</b>			
When I don't have anything better to do	1.00	.93	1.00
When there is no one else to talk with or be with	.61	.67	.50
To pass the time	.51	.63	.60
<b>Escape</b>			
To escape the daily problems	.84	.81	.98
To forget work or study	.70	.81	.58

Note. For television news n=1,064; for newspaper n=957; for online news site n=782.

## Results

### *Preliminary Results*

Respondents spent 154.52 minutes ( $SD = 120.87$ ) on average a day using the internet, followed by television ( $M = 129.08$ ;  $SD = 75.18$ ). Time spent on news however shows a somewhat different ranking, with most time spent on television news ( $M = 27.69$ ;  $SD = 21.13$ ), online news site ( $M = 14.95$ ;  $SD = 22.37$ ), and newspaper ( $M = 13.05$ ;  $SD = 18.54$ ), which gives an indication that in the Low Countries television news is still regarded as the main source for news.

A first glance at the descriptives of the uses and gratifications measures for newspaper, television news, and online news (Table 3) shows that across the three news platforms, information/surveillance has (on a scale from 1 to 5) the highest mean, followed by entertainment, and pastime. This confirms the relevance of the information/surveillance gratification for consuming news, as individuals *perceive* it as the most important motive driving their consumption of television news, newspaper and online news sites. However, the findings indicate that secondary and tertiary gratifications also seem to be perceived as relevant in understanding young people's news consumption, with relatively high scores for these gratifications across the examined platforms. This could be an indication that the different news platforms are *perceived* as serving similar needs, although the mean for information/surveillance is slightly higher for television news and newspaper, and newspaper and online news have higher entertainment and pastime scores.

**Table 3.** Descriptives of uses and gratifications measures by news platform

	<i>TV news</i>		<i>Newspaper</i>		<i>Online news</i>	
	<i>(n=1,116)</i>		<i>(n=995)</i>		<i>(n=812)</i>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Entertainment	2.90	0.93	3.06	0.96	3.10	1.05
Information/surveillance	3.92	0.85	3.81	0.96	3.63	1.01
Social utility	2.55	0.86	2.71	0.91	2.87	0.97
Pastime	2.69	0.98	2.92	1.00	2.99	1.04
Escape	2.29	0.99	2.29	1.02	2.44	1.08

Note. Measured on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (totally not agree) to 5 (totally agree).

***Relations between uses and gratifications measures and news consumption across traditional and online news platforms***

The first step in testing our hypotheses is examining the zero-order correlations between gratifications and time spent on television news, newspaper, and online news site (see Table 4). H1 predicted that the information/surveillance gratification will be the strongest predictor of time spent on printed newspapers, television news and online news sites. As reported in Table 4, the information/surveillance gratification shows the highest statistically significant and positive relationship with time spent on television news, newspaper, and online news site ( $r = .251, .285, .264, p < .01$ ). H2 expected that an increase in diversion needs will result in an increase in time spent on printed newspapers, television news and online news sites. Entertainment and escape gratifications show statistically significant and positive relations with use of the three analyzed news media, however pastime only correlates significantly with online news.

**Table 4.** Pearson product-moment correlations between gratifications and time spent on news by platform

	<i>Time spent watching television news (n= 1,116)</i>	<i>Time spent reading newspaper (n= 995)</i>	<i>Time spent consulting online news site (n= 812)</i>
Entertainment	.168**	.207**	.162**
Information/surveillance	.251**	.285**	.264**
Social utility	.130**	.236**	.243**
Pastime	.003	-.057	.077*
Escape	.192**	.135**	.160**

\* $p < .05$ , two-tailed. \*\* $p < .01$ , two-tailed.

Although the zero-order correlations in Table 4 give a first indication of the individual relationships between the uses and gratifications measures and time spent on television news, newspaper and online news site, the interrelationships among the variables and the possible influences of other socio-demographic variables that could explain an increase in time spent with the examined news media are left aside. Hence, we furthermore examine these influences by means of an ordinary least squares regression analysis controlling for age, gender, and education, as reported in Table 5.

The multivariate regression analysis provides evidence for our first hypothesis: the information/surveillance gratification is the strongest predictor of time spent with printed newspapers, television news, and online news sites. Hence, young people with higher needs for information/surveillance will consume significantly more news across the different news platforms than those with lower information/surveillance needs. Contrary to the zero-order correlations reported in Table 4, the regression analysis shows mixed findings for our second hypothesis after controlling for other variables: an increase in entertainment needs is statistically significant and positively related to an increase in time spent on television news and newspapers. Equally, an increase in escape gratifications is statistically significant and positively related to an increase in television news and online news sites. Interestingly, the pastime gratification is statistically significant but negatively linked with time spent on reading a newspaper: a decrease in pastime needs results in an increase in newspaper reading.

The fact that some statistically significant and positive zero-order correlations disappear in the regression analysis, means that they operate through other variables included in the regression analyses. Moreover, when analyzing these socio-demographic variables, we found that lower educated respondents consume significantly more television news than the higher educated ones. In contrast, highly educated and older individuals consume significantly more online news, than the younger and low educated ones.

**Table 5.** Standardized beta coefficients from ordinary least squares regression predicting time spent on television news, newspaper, online news site

	<i>Time spent watching television news</i>	<i>Time spent reading newspaper</i>	<i>Time spent consulting online news site</i>
Age	.045	.047	.087*
Gender (0 = female)	-.034	.046	.047
Education (0 = lower education)	-.111***	-.002	.092*
Entertainment	.087*	.078*	.018
Information/surveillance	.187***	.188***	.129**
Social utility	-.045	.064	.092*
Pastime	-.021	-.150***	-.050
Escape	.119***	.048	.092*
Time spent on television news	-	.143***	.126***
Time spent on newspaper	.126***	-	.033
Time spent on online news	.095**	.005	-
Total $R^2$	.122	.136	.125
$F$	13.826***	14.171***	10.539***
$n$	1,003	909	748

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Overall, the results from the regression analysis confirm time spent on television news, newspaper, and online news site is best predicted by the information/surveillance gratification, although our findings demonstrate that other diversion gratifications also play an explanatory role in young people's news consumption. Although these findings indicate that news consumption across the different platforms is partly driven by the same needs, some platform specific gratifications were found. More specifically, the results from our regression analysis showed that the social utility gratification was only statistically significant and positively related to time spent with online news sites.

### ***Uses of traditional and online news media***

Our third and fourth hypotheses test relationships between the uses of traditional and online news media in a multimedia environment. More specifically, hypothesis 3 predicted that time spent on online news sites will be negatively related to time spent on printed newspapers. A multivariate regression analysis, controlling for socio-demographic variables and platform specific gratifications for news, however, does not confirm this: we found positive, statistically insignificant relationships between the use of online news sites and reading a newspaper. Hypothesis 4 expected that time spent on online news sites will be negatively related to time spent on television news. The findings however do not support this hypothesis either. At the contrary, significant positive relations were found between watching television news and the use of online news sites: more time spent with one platform results in more time spent with the other and vice versa. A similar result was found for the two traditional news media in this study. Hence, Table 5 provides evidence that the use of online news does not result in a decreased use of traditional news media: our data support previous findings of young people's complementary use of the news media that surround them.

### **Conclusion and discussion**

In search of a better understanding of young people's news media consumption in a European high-media environment, this study analysed the role of uses and gratifications motivations in driving time spent with television news, newspapers, and online news sites, while controlling for the effects of possible influential socio-demographics. Our findings confirmed that the need to get information about the world or one's environment is the strongest uses and gratifications predictor for time spent on television news, newspapers, and online news sites. Nevertheless, young people's news consumption is also driven by 'diversion' needs. Especially television news, which young people also watch to escape from the daily routine or to be entertained. Although the latter was also found to increase reading a newspaper, people with less pastime needs will spend more time with newspapers than people with more pastime needs. For online news sites, this study only found a positive significant effect of escape gratifications. Interestingly, however, the social utility gratification showed only a significant positive relation with time spent on online news sites. So young people with higher information needs to use in everyday conversations consult more online news than those with lower social utility gratification needs.

One of the conclusions we can draw from these results is that traditional and online news platforms, although serving some needs that are mutually exclusive, overall are being consulted in search of the same gratifications, respectively information/surveillance and diversion gratifications. Nevertheless, in line with previous studies analyzing a possible replacement effect of online news on traditional news media (e.g.

Althaus & Tewksbury, 2000; Duta-Bergman, 2004), the use of online news was not found to diminish the use of traditional news platforms. On the contrary, we found that the use of television news enhanced the use of online news and vice versa. These findings confirm young people's complementary use of traditional and online news platforms. However, as the use of online news is still growing and young people are confronted with ever more time constraints, future research could focus on more platform-specific functions that traditional and online news media fulfil in the daily lives of the young. Furthermore, our regression analyses explained little variance in the time spent on news across television, newspaper, and internet. This indicates that other factors, such as platform-specific functions, could play a role in explaining news consumption across these different platforms. Dimmick et al. (2004) for example found that in the news domain the internet provides users satisfaction with more needs than any of the traditional media, and in doing so attributes to the decline of consumer time spent with television news. In their study the internet was considered superior to traditional news media for getting news that fits into a busy schedule, to get the latest updates on news stories, or for stories on a variety of topics. Equally, Flavian and Gurrea (2009) found that newspaper readers prefer the digital channel when searching for updated news. So it could be argued that although traditional and online news media serve similar uses and gratification needs, the specific characteristics and functionalities of the new media provide young news consumers with other needs that are gratified more appropriately by the digital platforms. Nevertheless in their study on digital versus traditional newspapers Flavian and Gurrea (2009) conclude: "given the differential characteristics of the internet – continuous news and immediate updates – as opposed to the traditional press, newspapers in the two mediums become two clearly differentiated products with a low degree of substitutability".

Overall, the importance of motivations in understanding and explaining news consumption becomes even clearer when looking at the socio-demographics included in our study. Although some significant influences on news consumption were identified, e.g. low educated respondents consuming more television news than high educated older ones and high educated young people consulting more online news than the younger and low educated respondents, these variables were not the strongest predictors of news consumption across the three platforms. So it seems that in a high-media environment such as the Low Countries with news made available through an array of platforms, it is not so much young people's skills or resources that drive their news consumption, but other factors such as the motivations they hold dear for consuming news via a specific platform.

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