



# FUTURE OF Communications

2026 APAC REPORT

# Report Methodology

**Third Party & Platform Data:** Synthesis of third-party industry data and platform changes (search, social, LLMs).

**Trend Reports:** Analyzing 100+ 2025 and 2025 trend reports to extract relevant insights and data on emerging trends and forecasts.

**News Media Audit & Publisher Moves:** Reviewing key articles and media coverage to assess the operating context and impact of earned, social, and digital media, and influencer marketing and comms.

**LLM Data:** Analysis of how AI search and LLMs surface sources and citations.

**Landscape Audit:** Examining research reports on the current state and future projections for earned media, social platforms, digital marketing, and brand.

**Creative Audit:** Evaluating best-in-class campaigns from across sectors (tech, health, consumers etc.) to identify effective strategies and innovations in communications.

**Consultations & Work:** Expert interviews with specialists to gain expert perspectives and validate findings. Knowing what works in market through client pilots and measurement.



# Custom sessions available on ...

AI

AI in Health

Future of Earned Media

Future of Social & Influence

Future of B2B



# Earned **Media:**

From Masthead to Models

FUTURE OF COMMUNICATIONS 2026 APAC REPORT

What is journalism and  
earned media in 2025?

# An industry in perma-crisis. Is it different this time?

Only 41% of journalists are confident about journalism's prospects in year ahead: down 19% since 2022

## Mid-2000s

### Blogs & Web 2.0

Traditional media declared “dead” as blogs, citizen journalism and platforms like HuffPost and BuzzFeed rose. The narrative was: Anyone with a WordPress could be a journalist.

## 2010s

### Social Media

The “pivot to video” era around 2015 to 2017 was a death knell moment. Facebook sucked up ad spend, publishers were crushed by the algorithm, and digital-native outlets went bankrupt or gutted newsrooms.

## Early 2020s

### Declining Ad Revenue Global Pandemic Fractured Ecosystem Fake News

Wave after wave of newsroom layoffs globally, plus shuttered outlets. Commentary often suggested the business model of journalism was fundamentally broken.

## Now

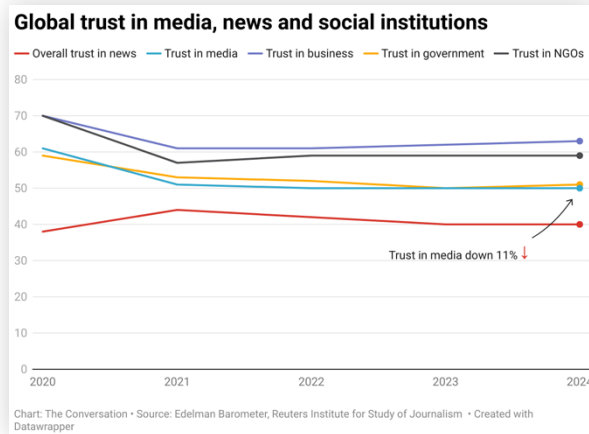
### AI Disruption Full-Blown Trust Crisis

The rise of LLM-powered search and ‘new media’ creators means audiences bypass outlets entirely — AI is the new middleman.

Another new narrative: Journalism is irrelevant if machines summarise everything for us and nothing is real.

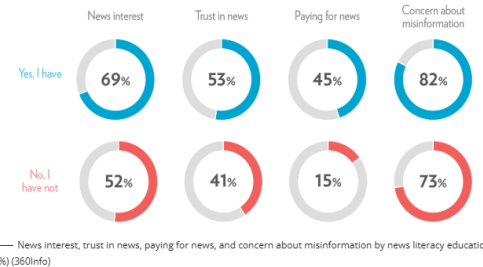
# Trust limbo: How low can it go?

Global trust in news across markets is 40%, the same for past three years



However, 'news confidence' is shockingly low in Australia

The report, produced by the News and Media Research Centre at the University of Canberra, reveals that 26 per cent of Australians now get their news primarily through social media, compared to 23 per cent from online news sites. Trust in news has plummeted to just 32 per cent, down from 40 per cent in 2016, while news avoidance has soared, with 69 per cent saying they sometimes or often avoid the news.



Trust in news has plummeted to just **32% for Australians**, down from 40% in 2016.

And now many believe media *deliberately mislead* for certain news

In APAC, sizable shares believe the media deliberately misleads on some stories.

**72%** in India

**69%** of Malaysia

**57%** in Australia

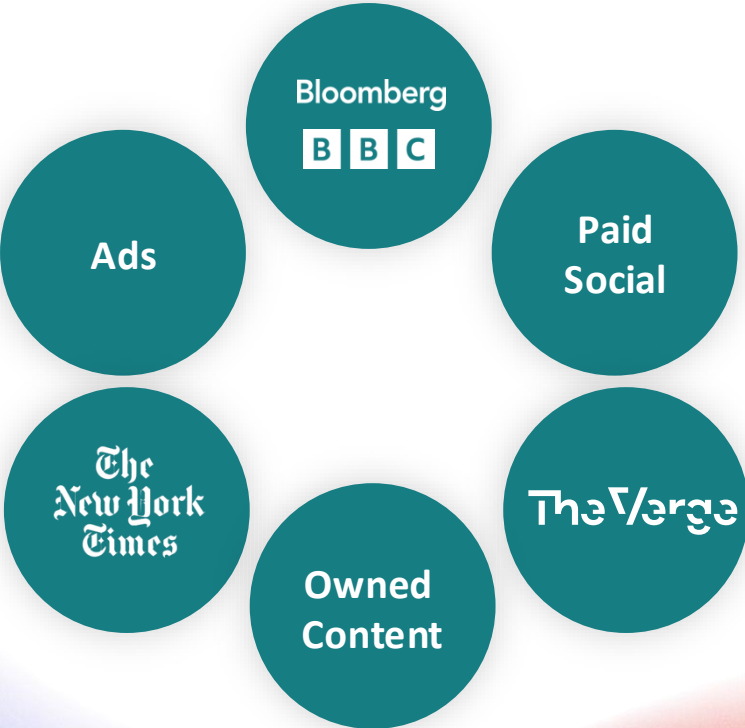
[Ipsos](#)

# The challenge: Decentralised influence

FROM A

## Concentrated orbit

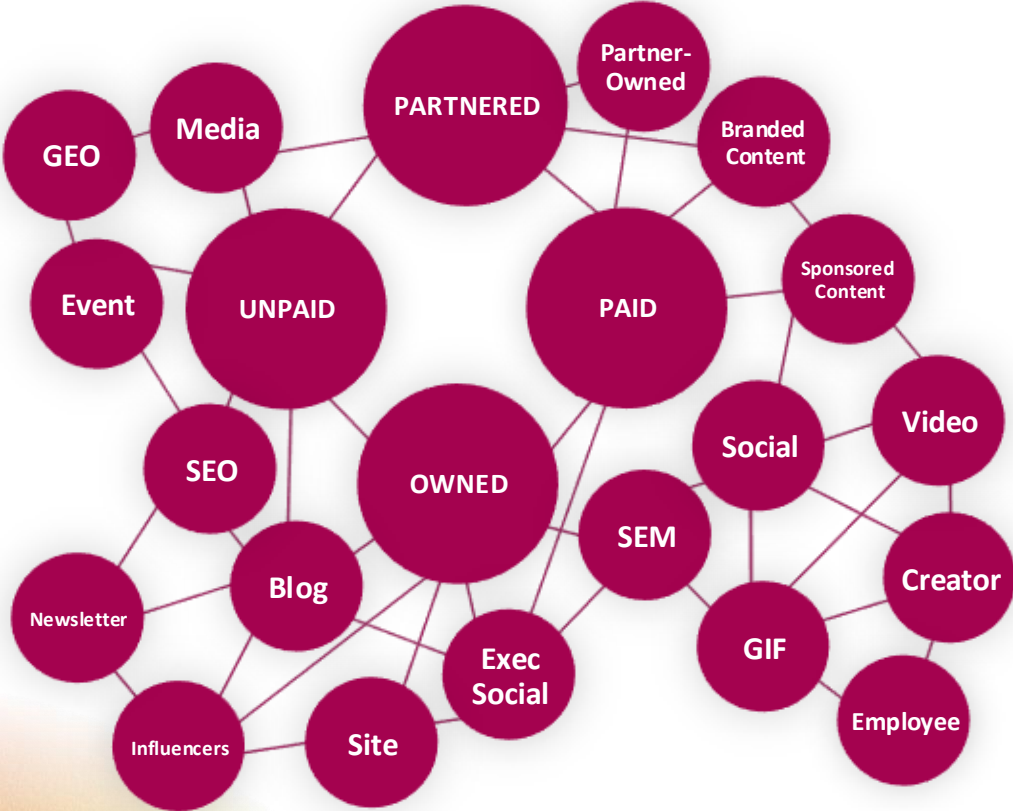
We've moved from using traditional tactics to reach audiences where they once were



TO A

## Constellation

To harnessing multiple dimensions of new stars

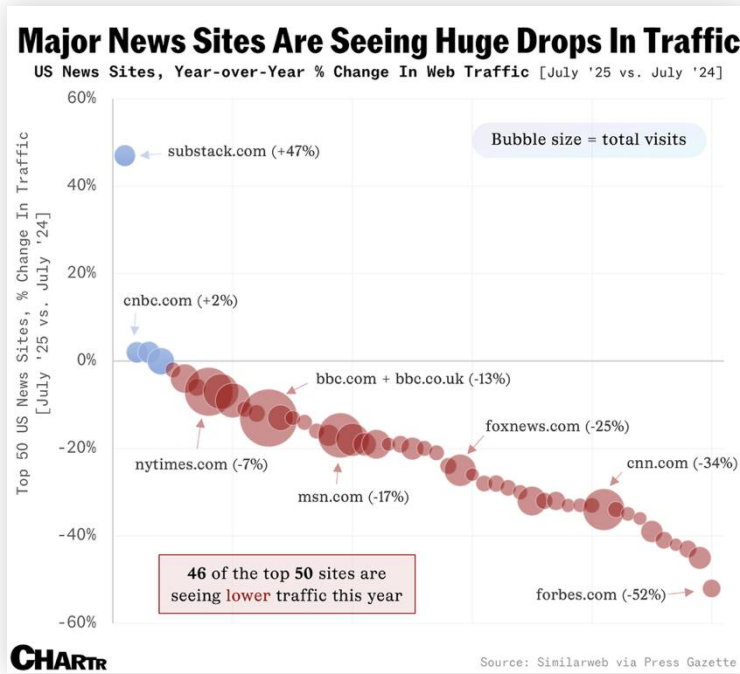


# Publishers are investing in AI platforms, social & direct

Where publishers plan to put more and less effort in 2025



# Nearly all major news websites lost traffic this year



In Australia, nearly all major outlets saw lower YoY traffic.

ABC News	-8%
news.com.au	-12%
nine.com.au	-14%
SMH	-10%
The Age	-11%
Daily Mail Aus	-18%
The Guardian	-7%
7NEWS.com.au	-16%
The Australian	-5%
SBS News	-15%

In the first quarter of 2025, Substack saw a 96% growth in Australia, climbing from 74K to almost 145K active users.

The only other major platform to see notable growth was New Corp Australia:

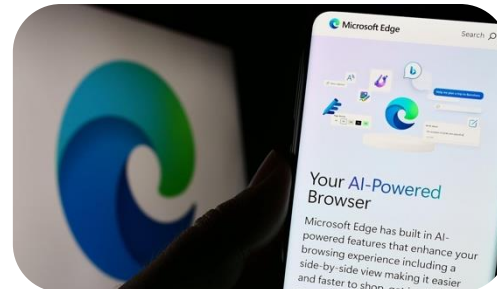
- News Corp Australia (up 4.7% month-on-month, reaching 18.5 million unique visitors - its highest ever digital audience)
- News Corp Australia appears to be the exception, successfully growing digital reach through its network of titles and digital strategy.

# Zero-Click AI Search is already here

Google controls  
**90%**  
of the global search  
market.

Google AI Overviews  
now trigger for  
**18%**  
of all searches.

- General search referral traffic to websites dropped 6.7% YOY, a fall of 800M searches.
- 69% of all news searches on Google now result in no click-throughs to news websites.
- Users are 10% more likely to end their session after seeing AI Overviews than without (26% vs. 16%).



## Google Injects Gemini Into Chrome as AI Browsers Go Mainstream

Google weaving Gemini further into the popular Chrome browser is an inflection point for AI in our software, although some users will still be looking for the "off" switch.

# 95% of LLM citations are nonpaid media

## LLM Citations Love Earned Authority



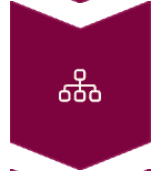
### Authority of source

Experts and trusted peers



### Clear entity-language

Company, spokesperson, context



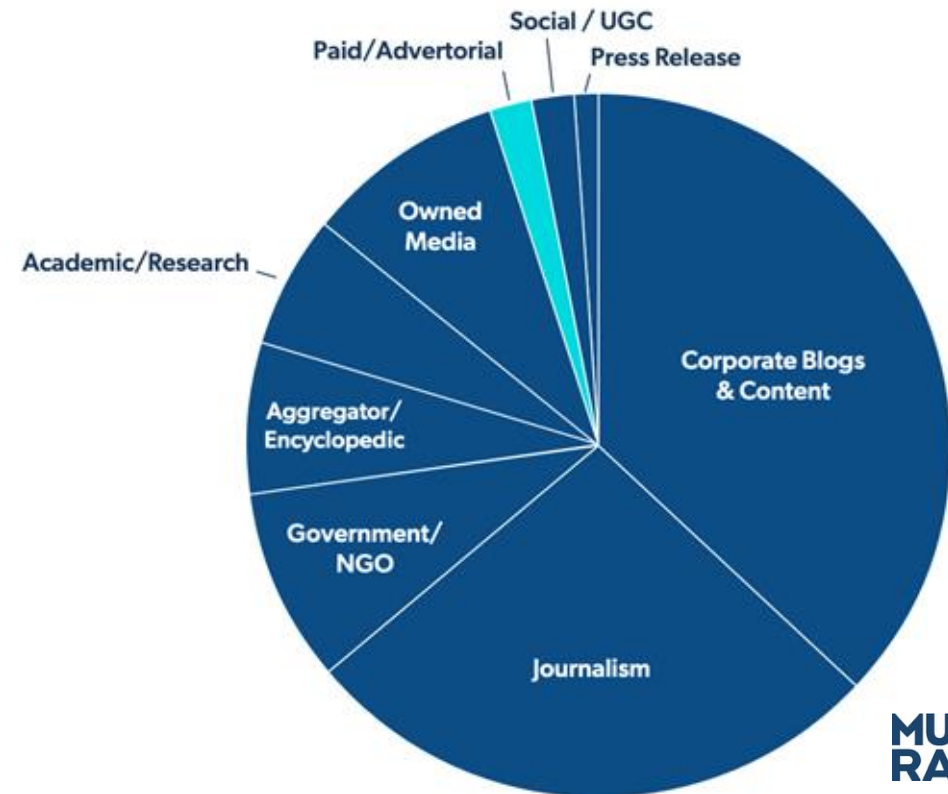
### Structured storytelling

Headlines, quotes, positioning



### Recurrence across sources

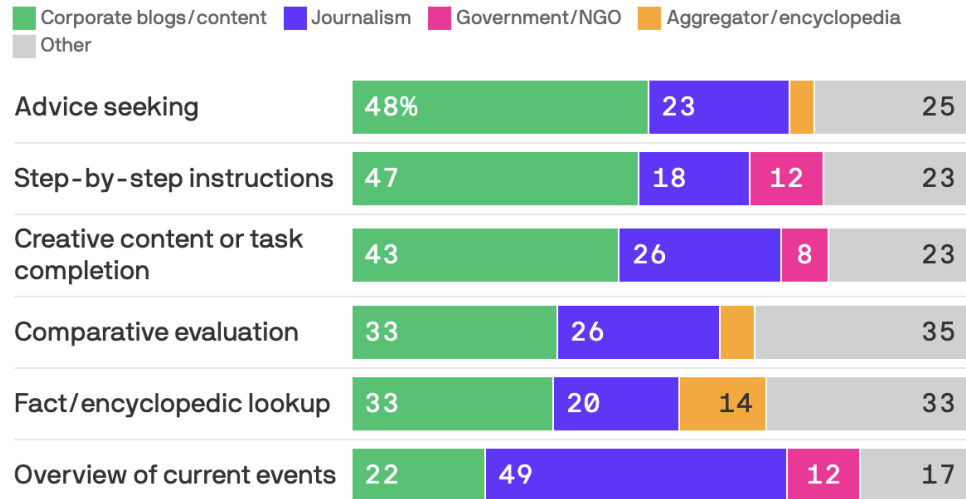
Models can trust credible information repeated across multiple trusted sources



**MUCK  
RACK**

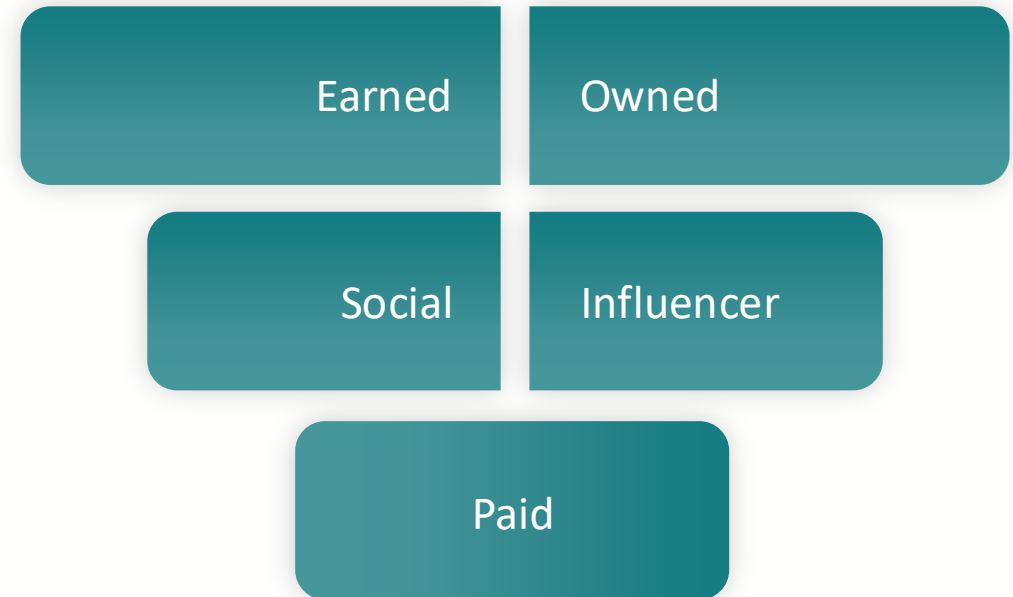
## While prompt intent changes source mix ... Corporate blogs/content & journalism still lead

Analysis of more than a million links from AI responses generated in July 2025



Data: Muck Rack; Note: ChatGPT ("4o" and "4o-mini"), Gemini ("flash" and "pro") and Claude ("sonnet" and "haiku") models used; Chart: Kavya Beheraj/Axios

## Multiple studies suggest AI search inverts traditional marketing hierarchy (until inevitable launch of LLM advertising)



# Content solar system for AI search universe



# Although AI news is the future, **social news is now**

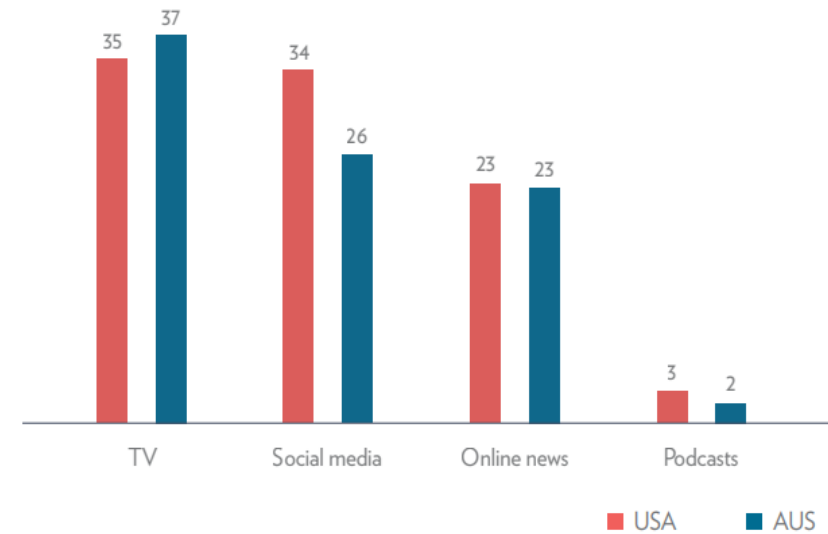
## Majority worldwide prefer social news

Across all markets the proportion consuming social video news has grown from 52% in 2020 to 65% in 2025.

26% of Australians now get their news primarily through social media, compared to 23% from online news sites.

## Australians prefer watching or listening to news across online/social channels

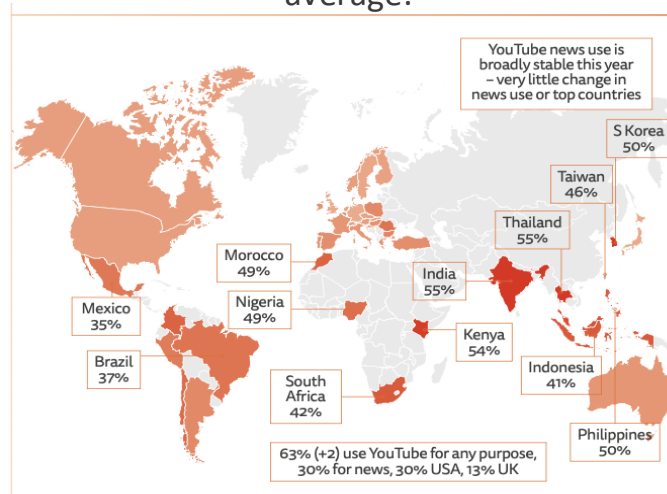
Figure 8.19: Main source of news (%)



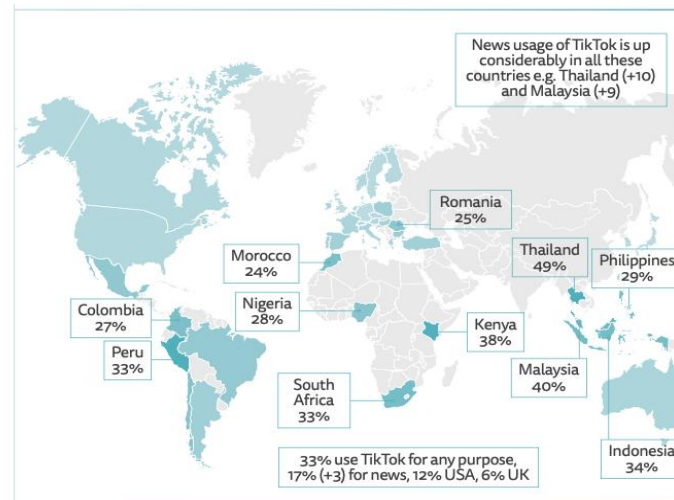
# YouTube & TikTok: Major news platforms



Globally, **30%** use YouTube for news weekly. In Australia, **31%** rely on YouTube as a news source, higher than the global average.



In Australia there has been a **14% increase** in the use of TikTok as a news source.



Alice Fahrer was promoted as the first Video Chief of Staff at News.com.au in a cross platform role



*The appointment of Alice Fahrer as Video Chief of Staff signals news.com.au's push into multi-channel video. With a focus on social-led formats and cross-platform storytelling, the brand is investing in scalable video production - and actively welcoming pitches that tap into this momentum.*

# Many legacy outlets are now essentially social-first

## ABC NEWS

now heavily prioritises social videos, Instagram Stories, and TikTok updates.



abcnewsaus ABC News Australia

Follow Message

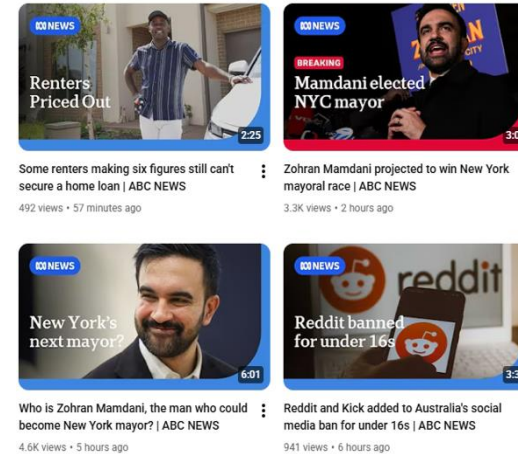
11 Following 1.2M Followers 81.4M Likes

"this is the kind of news I'm on this app for"

[ab.co/abcnewsapp](https://ab.co/abcnewsapp) | [play.google.com/store/app](https://play.google.com/store/app)

## ABC TV

In 2023 the ABC's digital audience reach surpassed each of its broadcast TV and radio reach for the first time.

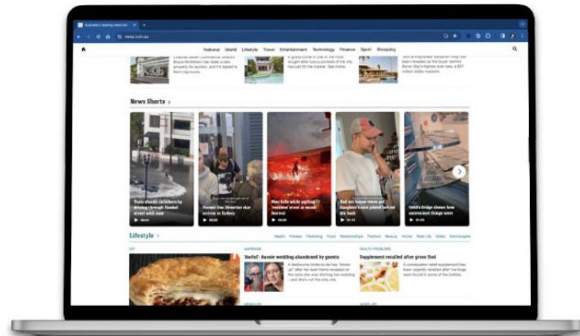


1.2M  
TikTok followers

2.47M  
YouTube subscribers

## NewsCorp Australia

"News Shorts" are a mobile-first vertical video platform with swipeable short videos.



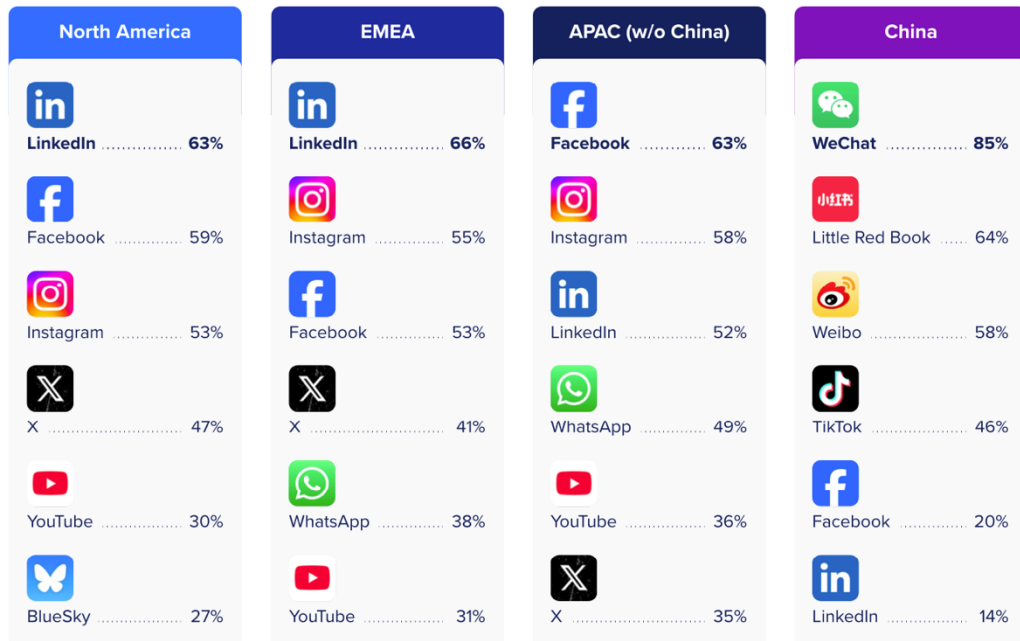
## On Demand

Australia's big three broadcasters each have their own one-stop streaming platforms: 7plus, 9Now, and 10 Play. These free, ad-supported services offer live and on-demand access to news

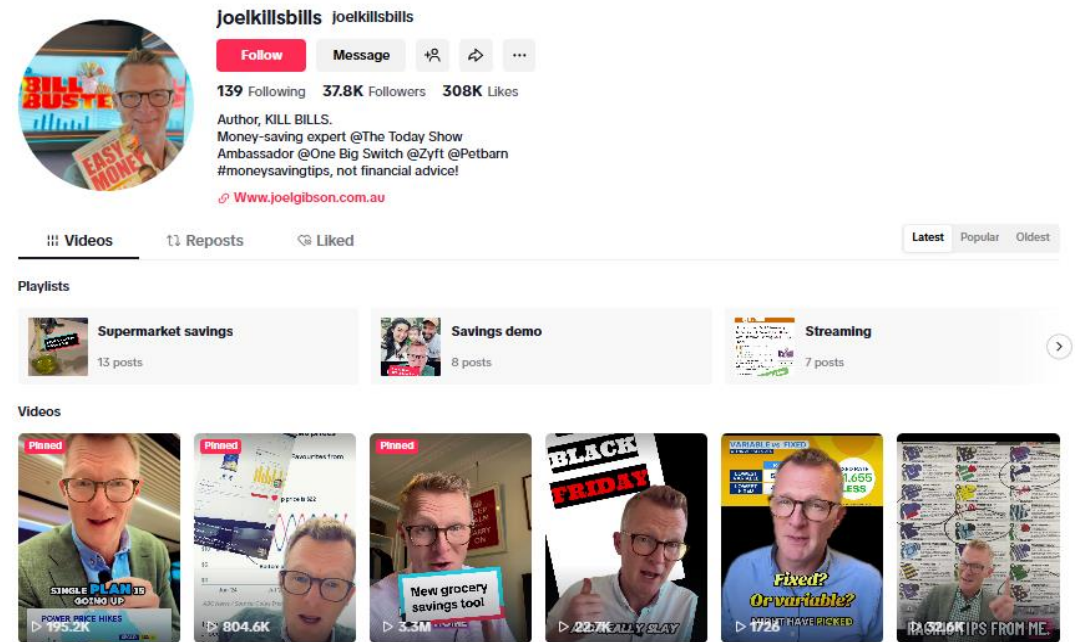


# Modern journalists are also across many socials

Which platforms do journalists use frequently for work purposes? Three are >50% usage.

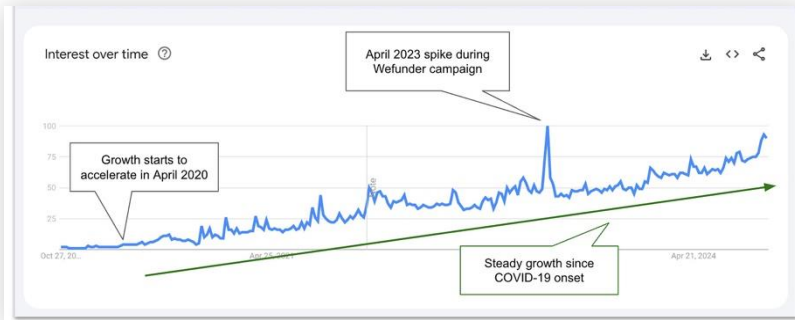


Joel Gibson: Today Show co-host host has a combined social following of approx. 100k across Twitter/X and Instagram.

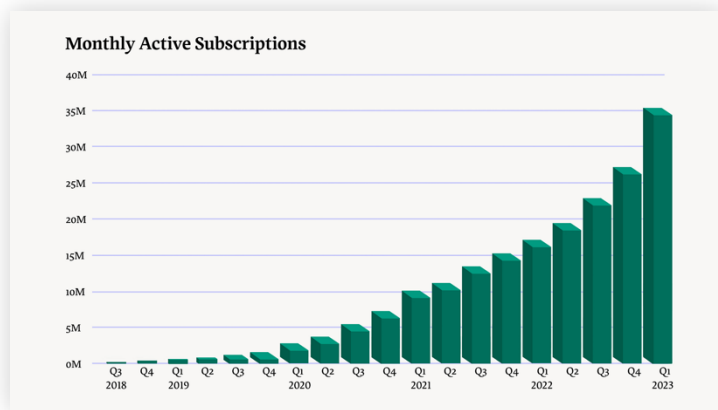


# Substack makes email inbox the new front page

## Google search trend for Substack since 2020



## Self-reported Substack active subscriptions



Substack saw a **96%** growth in Australia

Climbing from **74k** to **145k** active users

## Popular Australian Substacks with 10 to 40K subscribers

**the junkee pov**

culture analysis you'll tell your bestie. subscribe to see us in your inbox every wednesday

By junkee

**The's Substack**

My personal Substack

By The Squiz · Launched 2 years ago

**Mia Freedman's Babble**

Thoughts. Feelings. Outfits.

Subscribe



# Legacy media is embracing AI wholesale to stay alive

97%

of publishers are actively investing in AI, particularly in editorial functions. [INMA, 2025](#)

87%

of global publishers say that newsrooms are being fully or somewhat transformed by Gen AI. Reuters, 2024



## SMH

SMH has trialled AI tools to assist with grammar, spelling, and clarity - helping journalists clean up copy faster while maintaining editorial standards.



## News Corp Australia

In 2025, it rolled out the proprietary NewsGPT, a generative AI assistant that helps staff generate drafts, brainstorm ideas, summarise documents and refine writing. It's designed for internal use, not for public-facing content creation yet.

# Some media are conflicted on embracing AI

**“We’re not trying to be AI boosters. In fact, quite the opposite. I think there’s a lot of caution.**

A lot of time we spend cautioning people about uses of AI, both [in the] legal and editorial sense.

... but in the meantime, it’s going to let me transcribe handwritten notes in Arabic that I took messy iPhone photos of while I was on a reporting trip ...

And no reporter is going to say no to a competitive advantage, which I think is the theme of what we’re trying to build for them.”

**ZACH SEWARD**

Editorial director of AI Initiatives

**The New York Times**





# Younger, AI-native journalists are more bullish

“[Since starting in Jan 2025] ... I’ve already built a chatbot that can create a first draft of social video scripts in less than 30 seconds, using Reuters’ own AI platform.

It pulls from a database of our best scripts, our style guide and our journalism handbook, and although we always review and edit, the drafts usually need only minimal changes.

I’ve also created tools for captions, hashtags and one that scans long interviews or podcast transcripts to identify the best soundbites with time codes.

Next, I want to automate more of our internal processes so we can streamline everything from production to posting.”

**TRISTAN WERKMEISTER, 26**

Social Media Video Reporter



**REUTERS**

# Regardless, AI is transforming the audience experience

## Personalisation

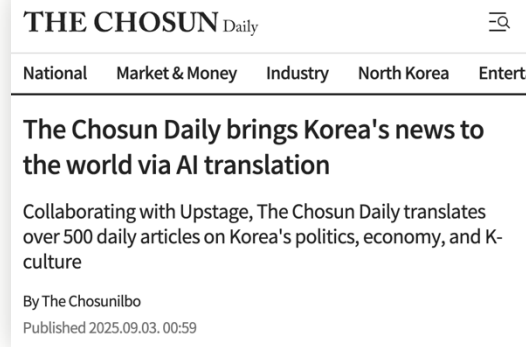
# 85%

of publishers plan to use AI for personalised content delivery.  
INMA, 2025

## Translation

# 65%

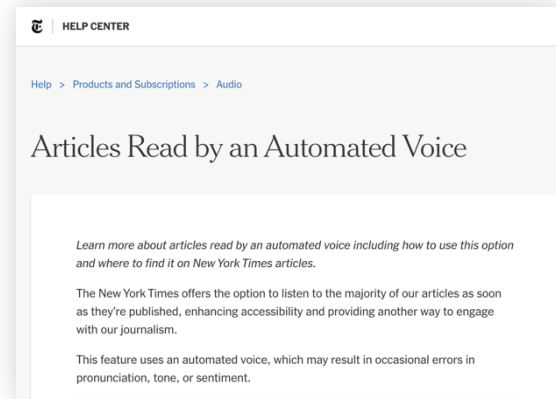
plan to use AI to translate news articles into different languages.



## Adaptation

# 75%

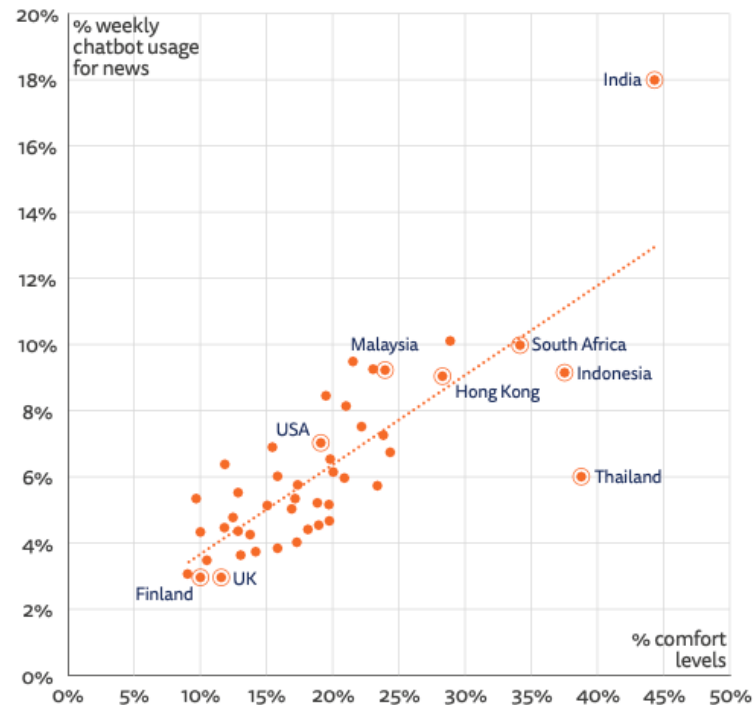
of global publishers said they would be actively exploring features that turn text into audio.



# Publishers are building their own AI news chatbots

56% said they would be looking into AI chatbots and search interfaces

WEEKLY USE OF AI CHATBOTS FOR NEWS PLOTTED AGAINST COMFORT WITH NEWS BEING MADE MOSTLY BY AI WITH SOME HUMAN OVERSIGHT - ALL MARKETS



## NewsGPT x NewsCorp

News Corp Australia launched “NewsGPT”, a secure AI tool built for internal newsroom workflows and business operations. It integrates models like ChatGPT, Gemini and Claude



## Ask Australian Traveler

Australian Traveller introduced “Ask AT”, an AI-powered chat interface trained on their archive of destination content to give readers personalised travel advice

# Media doing their part to fight disinformation



## ABC's Trusted News Initiative

The ABC is part of the global Trusted News Initiative, working with outlets like the BBC and Reuters to counter disinformation during major events.



## Guardian Australia's Transparency Push

Guardian Australia has published detailed explainers on how they verify sources and fact-check claims, especially around climate science and Indigenous affairs.



## News Corp Conduct

News Corp's updated Standards of Business Conduct (2025) strengthen its fight against misinformation.

# More publishers are launching AI avatars



## ARN AU's AI Radio Presenter "Thy"

The Australian Radio Network representing top-tier metro stations like KIIS FM and Gold FM secretly piloted an AI-generated host called "Thy" on its CADA Sydney station for six months.



## GMA Philippines' AI Avatars "Maia & Marco"

In 2023, GMA Network unveiled Maia and Marco, AI avatars serving as bilingual (English and Tagalog) sports newscasters for digital platforms covering NCAA sports.



## Hangzhou China's Historical First

In March 2025, a Hangzhou television channel introduced Xiaoyu, a fully AI-generated news anchor who hosts an entire broadcast — marking the first-ever AI anchor to cover a full news program.

# While others zag **back toward print**

Harder to AI fake, easier to value



## ACM Expansion

Australian Community Media (ACM) launched 14 new weekend newspaper editions across its regional mastheads.



## National Print Surge

The Australian's print readership grew, with the weekday print edition increasing by 7.7% to around 450,000 readers, while the weekend edition rose 7.5% to approximately 673,000.



## The Mag Comeback

According to Roy Morgan Research over, 14.7 million Australians now read magazines with print alone reaching 11.1 million.



## ELLE Australia

After a three-year absence, Are Media Australia's returned ELLE magazine to print in 2024, doubling to four annual editions in 2025.

# Summary and brand recommendations

Make no  
assumptions  
on Australian audience  
preferences

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Get ahead of AI search with GEO and LLM-friendly content ecosystems

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Custom outreach and content packages for new media (think video)

# *Tomorrow's Gifts in Wills* will be influenced by *today's AI answers*.

Your mission deserves to be understood.  
We can help you ensure your story is one that's seen.



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# Thank you!



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