



Nearly a fifth of Finns pay for online news

The number of Finns paying for online news has increased since last year, according to the Digital News Report 2018 questionnaire-based survey published by the Reuters Institute at the University of Oxford. Additionally, an increasing number of individuals who do not currently pay for online news anticipate they will do so within the next 12 months.

Of all 37 nations that participated in the survey, trust towards news is the highest in Finland, and the traditional Finnish news media also has a strong position online. Finns typically search for news directly on the news provider's website instead of finding news through social media or another third party. This trend appears to be getting even stronger.

A problem associated with news media has been that Finns are used to getting online news for free; there is only limited interest in paying for services. Since 2014, the proportion of Finns over the age of 18 who pay for online news has remained at approximately 15 percent, only reaching a total of 18 percent this year. The willingness to pay for online news also increased amidst those who do not yet do so. In 2017, only 6 percent of non-paying individuals believed they would be likely to pay for online news during the next 12 months, whereas in 2018 this proportion has already risen to 11 percent.

The reach of news is showing a minor decline

Even though the internet has strengthened its position as a news source, it has not displaced traditional distribution channels (magazines, radio, TV). Finns get their news almost equally through traditional channels and online media. Furthermore, the reach of online news does not appear to be increasing. On the contrary, the weekly reach of online news in Finland has decreased from 90 to 85 percent since 2015. During the same period, the reach of news distributed via traditional channels decreased from 88 to 84 percent.

"It might be that there is less space for news in people's everyday lives when time is dedicated toward social media discussions and various online entertainment services," suggests **Esa Reunanen**, a researcher at the University of Tampere.

The importance of smart devices is increasing

The smartphone's importance as a tool for accessing news is still increasing. Whilst some years ago smartphones were still an alternative to computers for following news, more and more individuals are now using smartphones as their main or only means of accessing online news.

There are significant differences in the use of smart devices between age groups. For over half of those below the age of 45, smartphones are already the main device for following online news, whereas more than half of the group of over-45s still continue to use a computer as their main device. Within

the younger population there is a rapid decline in the use of computers for following news, whereas older individuals are showing a rapid increase in the use of smartphones for the same purpose.

This year there is also an increase in the importance of audio and voice activation. Especially in countries where AI speakers are available, many news providers have bravely engaged in experimentation.

“This is similar to results from many other studies that forecast audio and voice activation to radically change the way in which we search for information,” notes **Noora Pinjamaa**, Executive Director of the Media Industry Research Foundation of Finland.

Despite criticism, trust toward the media has been preserved

According to the survey, trust toward news remains the highest in Finland. The majority of Finns appear to see the mainstream news media as relatively trustworthy. This despite half of the respondents reporting encounters during the past week with journalism that was poor, flawed or misleading in a number of ways.

In this survey, roughly half of the respondents recognised at least one of the listed so-called alternative media sources by name and 8 percent reported having followed one of them during the past week.

During the past few years, the mainstream media has also been strongly criticised by the alternative media and there have been discussions about ‘fake’ news.

“We’ve got a very vocal minority that, even in Finland, seeks to promote mistrust in the media and claims that there is a lack of trust in the media. In reality, citizens do criticise the media, but also trust it in a completely different way compared with other types of information being spread on the internet,” observes **Elina Grundström**, Chair of the Council for Mass Media in Finland.

In the Finland report research results are also commented by **Kirsi Hakaniemi**, Head of Digital Business at KeskiSuomalainen Oyj, **Pia Kalsta**, CEO of Sanoma Media Finland, **Juha Laakkonen**, CEO of Kaleva Oy, **Riikka Reunanen**, CEO of Basso Media, and **Kai Telanne**, President and CEO of Alma Media Corporation.

The Reuters Institute Digital News Report compares the use of news in 37 countries. The survey is conducted annually, and Finland has been included since 2014. The information is based on a questionnaire with approximately 2000 respondents from each country.

Reports (available 2018-6-14)

http://www.viestintalantutkimussaatio.fi/vts/raportit/reuters-instituutin_digital_news_-raportti

Further information

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