

Generation Z and the News: Patterns of News Consumption and Trust in the UK Digital Media Landscape

Bethany Jane Wood

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Abstract

This study examines how Generation Z consumes and engages with news, the levels of trust they place in various sources, and the factors influencing these behaviours. It aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the evolving media habits of post-millennials within the context of a rapidly shifting digital landscape. The research is underpinned by Generational Theory, Actor Network Theory, Diffusion of Innovation Theory, and Social Learning Theory, offering a multidimensional framework for analysing the relationship between generational identity, technological adoption, and media trust.

The study draws on quantitative data collected from a survey of 800 'Gen Z' respondents, distributed during the COVID-19 pandemic. This period offered a unique context in which news consumption patterns were intensified and reshaped by both the urgency of information and the constraints of physical distancing. The survey explored respondents' preferred news platforms, their trust in different types of media, and the social and technological influences shaping these preferences.

Findings indicate that Generation Z predominantly access news through digital and social media platforms, with trust levels varying significantly depending on the source and its perceived credibility. The study also highlights the influence of parental engagement, socio-economic background, and educational level on news consumption behaviours and trust formation. Furthermore, it identifies the active role that post-millennials play in the news production cycle, particularly through content sharing and online commentary.

These insights contribute to the broader discourse on generational media engagement and offer valuable implications for news organisations seeking to build trust and relevance with younger audiences.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background

The inspiration for this study was born of the erroneous statement made by a student in class. When challenged about the supposed fact they had presented, the student simply said, “I read it on Facebook”. Despite raising an eyebrow to this statement, it did lead to a desire for further investigation as to how young people were gaining access to information and the trust in which they held this information.

This thesis applies both Harcup’s (2017) and Conboy’s (2004) definitions of news - emphasising its timeliness, factual basis, and professional curation, while also expanding on them by incorporating the audience-centred turn in journalism studies. While traditional definitions focus on the structural and institutional production of news, this thesis acknowledges that audiences, particularly younger and less traditional consumers, increasingly define news through personal relevance and subjective impact.

Building on Robertson’s (2023) findings, the thesis recognises that during socially significant moments, audiences often interpret news in more fundamental, affective, and individualised terms. This aligns with Harcup’s (2021) updated news values, which include relevance as a key criterion. Therefore, the thesis positions news not only as a product of journalistic norms and practices but also as a socially constructed concept shaped by audience perception, experience, and trust - particularly within intergenerational contexts.

In doing so, the thesis bridges institutional and audience-centred perspectives, offering a more nuanced understanding of how Generation Z engages with and defines news in relation to parental influence and broader social learning processes.

It is important to understand how younger audiences are engaging with the news and the reasoning behind it. Liberal democratic societies such as the UK, place great responsibility on Journalism practitioners to inform society of

social issues as well as perform a civic duty (Drok *et al.*, 2018). An academic definition of a journalism practitioner can be drawn from the broader concept of journalistic roles and professional identity. According to Mellado *et al.* (2017), journalism practitioners are individuals who engage with the production, selection, and dissemination of news, guided by professional norms, role conceptions and institutional expectations. These practitioners operate within journalistic cultures that shape their values, routines, and the way they interpret their role in society. In essence, a journalism practitioner is not only someone who reports news, but also someone who navigates the ethical, cultural and technological dimensions of journalism in practice. This thesis therefore defines journalism practitioner as a professionally guided individual who actively shapes and interprets news within evolving cultural and technological concepts. Furthermore, journalism practitioner will also be referred to interchangeably as 'journalists' throughout this thesis.

The younger generation are the next politicians, leading entrepreneurs and consumers and overall, the up-and-coming most influential generation (Munsch, 2021). Subsequently, considering how they are engaging with news now is of the utmost importance. Put simply, it is vital that they are well informed. In addition to this, (although not the primary rationale behind this research) commercial imperatives dictates that brand loyalty is key and that once this is established it is there for the foreseeable future (Chen and Pain, 2021).

The focus of this study is post-millennials (those born after 1995). There are many terms for this generation such as Generation Z or 'Gen Z', Zoomers, iGeneration, Gen Tech, Gen Wii, Homeland Generation, Net Generation, Digital Natives, Neo-Digital Natives, Plurals and Internet Generation (Dangmei and Singh, 2016; Dimock, 2019; Kuzminskyy, 2014; Lauzen *et al.*, 2007; Palfrey and Gasser, 2011; Prensky, 2010; Rosen, 2011; Turner, 2015). For the purpose of this research, they will be referred to interchangeably as post-millennials to signify their links to the previous generation (millennials) and Generation Z or 'Gen Z' to allow for fluidity.

The significant contribution of this research lies in its examination of UK post-millennial (those born after 1995) news consumption and trust during a transformative period, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic. It also explores the importance of media literacy and reliable news sources in an increasingly digital world, contributing to a broader understanding of news consumption and trust, providing a foundation for future studies.

Furthermore, this study makes a significant contribution to the existing literature and academic research on news audiences and engagement, specifically with regards to the post-millennial demographic which it focuses on. The findings provide a contemporary and up to date understanding of Generation Z's news consumption, engagement and trust in news during a time of crisis (COVID-19 pandemic). News consumption refers to the ways in which individuals interact with news content across various media platforms, including how often they access it, the methods they use to select it, and how they interpret the information presented (Strömbäck *et al.*, 2013). News engagement refers to the extent and manner in which individuals interact with news content, including behaviours such as reading, sharing, commenting, and discussing news across various platforms. It encompasses both passive exposure and active participation, reflecting the depth of users' involvement with news media (Boulianne, 2016).

Although the contribution of this research is predominantly academic, it also offers insight into how news organisations can better tailor their content and strategies to meet the needs of younger audiences. This could lead to more effective communication, increased audience retention, and a deeper understanding of the evolving media landscape. Ultimately, these findings could help shape the future of news media and its relationship with the next generation of consumers.

Research into post-millennial news consumption is still relatively limited, with scholars tending to focus on Generation X, the previous generation (Doctor, 2014; Hoover, 2009; Poindexter, 2018). Researchers such as Edgerly *et al.* (2018a, 2018b) focussed on parental influences as well as news engagement from Generation Z, however, the research was conducted on

US adolescences (between the ages 12-17) and did not take into consideration how they may have consumed news as adults. Similarly to Edgerly *et al.* (2018a, 2018b), Twenge (2017), who referred to post-millennial's as iGen, ruled that there is a disengagement and passivity to news from Generation Z. This may have been true at the time of those studies (when the sample was 12-17 years old), but as digital technology has developed, so has engagement and trust.

Digital technology encompasses a wide array of electronic tools and systems used to create, store, process, and communicate information. These technologies - such as smartphones, computers, and digital platforms - are not only central to how individuals, particularly students, engage with learning and entertainment (Brewer, 2018), but are also deeply embedded within networked infrastructures that facilitate constant connectivity, interaction, and information exchange. In this thesis, digital technology is understood not merely as a set of tools, but as an interconnected ecosystem through which Generation Z accesses, engages with, and evaluates news content. This networked nature shapes their consumption habits, fosters personalised information flows, and influences their levels of trust in news, as content is increasingly encountered through algorithmically curated feeds, peer sharing, and platform-specific norms.

Overall, the role of parental modelling in shaping news consumption and trust has been under-explored in the context of digital media. This research examines how parental engagement with news influences post-millennials' news consumption and trust, providing a nuanced understanding of intergenerational media habits. Edgerly *et al.* (2018) and Del Vicario *et al.* (2017) have touched on parental influence, but this thesis extends their findings by focusing on digital platforms.

Furthermore, in addition to exploring parental influence, it is vital to understand other social influences. While some research, including works by Aalberg *et al.* (2013) and Broer *et al.* (2019), has examined the role of socio-economic status and education in media consumption, there is limited understanding of how these factors specifically affect Generation Z. This

thesis delves into the correlations between higher education, socio-economic status, and greater trust in digital news platforms, highlighting the disparities in news access and trust.

With regards to research around digital news platforms, Gentilviso and Aikat (2020) sought to establish how post-millennials were influencing the news landscape. Their research had a strong focus on social media and its implications. Carr and Hayes' (2015) defined social media as internet-based platforms that enable users to interact, share content and present themselves to various audiences, either in real time or asynchronously. These platforms – such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, are driven by user-generated content and foster a sense of social connection and engagement. This is the definition which will be applied throughout this thesis. Gentilviso and Aikat's (2020) study found that 'Gen Z' preferred digital and social media platforms over traditional news sources like newspapers and television. Yet despite their youth, post-millennials used social media for political and social engagement, viewing it as a tool for change. Although much of the data is still relevant today, the methodology was a meta-analysis of 17 studies which were pre-pandemic and again from the US. This further emphasises the need for further research.

Although progress has been made with regards to Generation Z's media consumption in an ever-changing digital ecosystem, previous studies, such as those by Alysen *et al.* (2020) and Bull (2015), have often focused on traditional media consumption, leaving a gap in understanding how digital platforms influence news consumption and engagement. This thesis explores the preference for digital news platforms among Generation Z, providing insights into how digital literacy and access to technology shape news consumption habits.

As will be demonstrated within this thesis, the acceleration in the development of digital technology and its implications on post-millennial news consumption have subsequently changed attitudes to news and overall consumption. Similar to Gentilviso and Aikat (2020), Kalogeropoulos and

Newman (2017) made headway in analysing Generation Z's reliance on Smartphones to access news. However, this data is also pre-pandemic and given advances in digital technology and the maturing of the age group, while being an excellent foundation, now needs to be reviewed.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly altered media consumption patterns, yet there is a lack of comprehensive studies on its impact on Generation Z. This thesis addresses this gap by analysing how the pandemic has intensified digital news consumption and affected trust in various news sources. Research by Cinelli *et al.* (2020) and Nielsen *et al.* (2020) on the infodemic during the pandemic provides a backdrop for this analysis, but the thesis offers a focused examination of Generation Z's responses.

1.2 Research Questions

All the aforementioned studies explored how news was being accessed. Nevertheless, (with the exception of Edgerly *et al.* (2018a)), they do not explore in depth the justification for these choices and overall attitudes to the news that post-millennials are engaging with. This study offers this originality by exploring how Generation Z are accessing the news in terms of frequency and platform choice; justifications for preferred platforms and engagement; levels of trust in news content; rationalisations for these attitudes and how they are influencing today's news distribution. To summarise, this thesis addresses the following research questions:

- RQ1: How are Generation Z consuming and engaging with the news?
- RQ2: What are the levels of trust post-millennials have in the news they are consuming?
- RQ3: Were the trust levels of news by post-millennials, along with their overall news consumption impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- RQ4: What are the reasons behind Generation Z's engagement and trust in news?

The first three research questions underpin RQ4. For RQ4 to be addressed it is imperative that the RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3 are answered. This provides a sequential nature to the analysis of the findings. As a result, when discussing the findings for this thesis, RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3 will be referred to as 'first stage results' and RQ4 will be referred to as 'second stage results'.

1.3 Research Method

To address these research questions, a mixed-method approach was taken (Cresswell, 2013). As part of the initial stages of this research, a preliminary study was conducted in the form of two focus groups. The purpose of the focus groups was to underpin the development of the survey design ensuring that it was pitched appropriately to the target demographic. The quantitative data from the surveys was then analysed and a hierarchical theoretical framework applied: Generational Theory (Strauss and Howe, 2009), Actor Network Theory (ANT), (Latour, 2010) and the Diffusion of Innovation (Rogers, 2003). In addition to these theoretical concepts, independent variables: parental influence, socio-economic status and educational level, also informed the theoretical framework. Chapter 3 provides a comprehensive explanation and illustration of how the theoretical framework is formed, along with analysis of the theories.

1.4 Thesis Structure

The thesis is structured to systematically explore Generation Z's news consumption and trust, integrating theoretical frameworks and empirical data. This approach ensures a comprehensive analysis of the multifaceted factors influencing news engagement, providing valuable insights for academia and news organisations to engage effectively with this digital-native generation.

By structuring the thesis in this manner, the research can address the complexities of Generation Z's media habits through a detailed examination of various independent variables such as socio-economic status, educational level, and parental influence. Each chapter builds upon the previous one, creating a cohesive narrative that links theoretical concepts with empirical

findings. This methodical approach not only enhances the robustness of the research but also ensures that the conclusions drawn are well-supported by data.

Chapter 2, titled "Literature Review: Changing Trends in News Consumption," explores how Generation Z consumes and engages with news, their trust levels, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on these behaviours. It provides a rationale for the thesis research questions, examining previous studies on news consumption and trust across different demographics. The chapter highlights the shift towards digital and social media platforms, the role of algorithms, and the challenges of misinformation. Its significance lies in contextualising the study, identifying gaps in the literature, and informing the theoretical framework and methodology for the thesis.

Chapter 3 explains the theoretical framework for the thesis, integrating Generational Theory, Actor Network Theory (ANT), Diffusion of Innovation (DoI), and Social Learning Theory (SLT). It explains how these theories, along with independent variables: parental influence, socio-economic status, and education, help understand Generation Z's news consumption, engagement, and trust. This chapter is vital as it provides the conceptual foundation for the research, linking theoretical concepts to the research questions. It ensures a comprehensive approach to analysing the multifaceted ways Generation Z interacts with news, guiding the study's methodology and analysis.

Chapter 4 details the methodology used to address the research questions, focusing on Generation Z's news consumption, engagement, and trust. It describes a mixed-method approach, starting with focus groups to inform survey design, ensuring relevance to the target demographic. The survey, conducted online with 800 respondents, examines variables like parental influence, socio-economic status, and education. The chapter emphasises the original approach of combining qualitative insights from focus groups with quantitative survey data, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of

post-millennial news behaviours. Ethical considerations and detailed data analysis methods are also discussed, ensuring robust and reliable findings.

Chapter 5 presents a comprehensive analysis of data from the survey of 800 post-millennials, focusing on their news consumption habits and trust levels, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. This chapter of the first stage findings is structured around three research questions (RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3), which underpin the second stage findings (RQ4). This sequential approach highlights the foundational role of the first stage findings in contextualising the second stage findings. The theoretical framework from Chapter 3, including ANT, SLT, DoI, and Generational Theory, guided the analysis.

Chapter 6 delves into the second stage findings of the study, focusing on the reasons behind Generation Z's news consumption, engagement, and trust. It examines the influence of educational level, socio-economic status, and parental influence on these behaviours, which are the independent variables featured in the theoretical framework illustrated in Chapter 3. Using Kruskal-Wallis Testing, the chapter reveals differences between the groupings. Higher education and socio-economic status are linked to greater trust and engagement with digital news platforms, while there is an association between lower levels with more frequent online commenting. Parental influence is evident in the frequency and trust in news consumption, though its impact varies across platforms. These insights underscore the multifaceted factors shaping Generation Z's news behaviours, providing deeper context to the first stage findings and reinforcing the theoretical framework of the thesis.

Chapter 7 synthesises the findings of the study on post-millennials' news consumption and trust, emphasising the impact of digital platforms and the COVID-19 pandemic. It highlights the importance of media literacy and reliable news sources, framed through Actor Network Theory, Social Learning Theory, and Diffusion of Innovation. The chapter presents the conclusions gleaned from the first and second stage finding, addressing the

influence of socio-economic status, education, and parental modelling. It acknowledges the study's limitations and suggests areas for future research, underscoring the need for ongoing exploration of Generation Z's evolving media habits. This chapter is crucial for understanding and addressing the dynamic media landscape.

Chapter 2

Literature Review: Changing Trends in News Consumption

2.1 Introduction

This chapter contextualises the research within the wider literature. It also underpins the development of the research questions identified in Chapter 1 and the overall design of the research.

This chapter explores and analyses previous studies exploring news consumption of both Generation Z and other cross sections of society. This is to contextualise the current study and identify gaps in the literature on news engagement amongst post-millennials. In addition to this, the changing trends in journalism practice is analysed. This is explored with a specific focus on audience engagement and trust. This then, informs the theoretical framework (Chapter 3) and methodology (Chapter 4) adopted for this study.

Chapter 2 of the thesis is divided into several sections, each addressing different aspects of changing trends in news consumption, production and trust. Section 2.2: The Digital Turn in Journalism Production and News Consumption, examines the evolution of journalism and its impact on news consumption. This section provides historical context and highlights the shift from traditional to digital journalism, setting the stage for understanding how Generation Z consumes news differently from previous generations. Section 2.2.1: Social media and News, discusses social media's role in news dissemination and audience engagement. This section is crucial for exploring how social media platforms influence news consumption patterns among Generation Z, addressing RQ1 and RQ4.

Section 2.2.2 - Algorithms and News, explores how algorithms personalise news consumption and their implications. This section delves into the role of algorithms in shaping news consumption, which is vital for understanding the personalised news experiences of Generation Z and their trust in news content (RQ2 and RQ4). Section 2.2.3 - News and Trust, analyses the relationship between news consumption and trust. This section addresses

the critical issue of trust in news media, which is central to the thesis' exploration of Generation Z's trust levels in news content (RQ2).

Section 2.2.4 - World Pandemic, Infodemic and News Consumption, investigates the impact of COVID-19 on news consumption and trust. This section provides insights into how the COVID-19 pandemic affected news consumption habits and trust among Generation Z, directly addressing RQ3. Following on from that, Section 2.2.5 - Gen Z' and News, focuses on Generation Z's news consumption habits. This section is essential for understanding the specific news consumption behaviours of Generation Z, providing a foundation for RQ1. Section 2.2.5.1, "Gen Z' Trust in News," examines Generation Z's trust levels in news content. This section further explores the trust aspect, focusing on Generation Z's perceptions and trust in news, which is crucial for addressing RQ2.

Each section contributes to the overall thesis by addressing different aspects of news consumption and trust among Generation Z, providing a comprehensive understanding of the research questions.

2.2 The Digital Turn in Journalism Production and News Consumption

To understand how and why audiences, engage and consume news has changed, it is vital to explore how the media landscape has developed over time and its subsequent impact on audiences (Bradshaw, 2023; Usher, 2018). The landscape of journalism has changed dramatically in the last century, particularly in terms of broadcast journalism. In 1922, amateur radio stations were closed, and the BBC was launched (BBC, 2020). For almost a decade, as Britain's only legally recognised broadcaster, the organisation was considered to have a monopoly of the industry and with regards to news, worked alongside newspapers to inform the public. The birth of pirate radio in the thirties put an end to that (Street, 2000). As the access to technology grew and therefore more outlets became readily available, audiences too developed; picking and choosing certain mediums to fulfil certain needs (Katz *et al.*, 1973). This is something which has also been

mirrored within the print news sector as outlined by Conboy and Steel (2008).

One rapidly evolving piece of digital technology is the mobile phone. In the last decade, phones have evolved and are no longer simply phones, used only to make calls: they are now considered *mobile devices* given the multi-functions on offer (Westlund, 2013). These devices, which not only make calls but allow society to have an online presence, are taken for granted almost as much as cars (Ling, 2012). The evolution of the mobile phone has also allowed for greater accessibility to social media and in turn may be considered a driving force for the platforms' increasing popularity. In 2019, 45 million social media users were identified in the UK and of these, 39 million are mobile social media users (Battisby, 2019), demonstrating a need for news outlets to optimise this growing digital technology to ensure its output is achieving the maximum audience reach. Social media is considered by many to be a valuable tool for today's journalist (Domingo *et al.*, 2007; Posetti *et al.*, 2019; Primo and Zago, 2015).

Since early 2000, consumers of news have been incidentally exposed to content through third party platform recommendations or their own social medias which are algorithmically driven (Bar-Ilan, 2007). At the same time companies such as Google, Facebook and Snapchat have all developed specific formats which allow news to have a place. It has been found that audiences rarely access news directly; the majority going via a *side-door* route (Gentilviso and Aikat, 2020; Kalogeropoulos and Newman, 2017). *Side-door* in this instance is defined as being accessed via search engines, social media, email, mobile alerts and aggregators. As well as social media, news organisations have numerous other platforms and are considered to provide multi-media journalism (Bull, 2015). Although there are more opportunities for news exposure, it is unclear as to which platforms are the most effective at engaging with audiences and therefore justifies the application of RQ1.

Given the myriad ways in which audiences access and consume news, research into news consumption has grown significantly in recent years. For example, organisations such as Reuters, Ofcom and Statista provide multiple annual reports around the subject and can provide a high quantity of descriptive data with regards to chosen media platforms, outlets and news organisations as well as engagements. These reports are of interest to industry and academics alike and illustrate that 'Gen Z' are a more digitally focussed audience and are consuming news through less traditional platforms such as print and radio (Newman *et al.*, 2023; Ofcom, 2023a; Statista, 2023a).

However, while these reports do offer an insight into the preferences, attitudes and habits of demographics, they do not analyse the findings to provide possible causations or correlations which provides a rationale for RQ4. Nor do they consider contextual or cultural factors. The previously mentioned reports demonstrate how the popularity of online news is growing (Ofcom, 2020) and have been supported by other studies. For example, Bentley *et al.* (2019) study of the browsing history of 174 diverse Americans demonstrated how a high proportion of participants would access multiple articles in one news session¹ online. Furthermore, the research also demonstrates how the amount of people beginning their news sessions on social media had increased by 10 percent in five years. This signifies its growing importance in the consumption of news.

Though offering some interesting insight, Bentley *et al.* (2019) research did not provide an account of how the news was accessed as it relied on desktop users only. The BBC noted in 2013 that most of its weekend traffic was accessed via mobile phones as opposed to desktops and within 12 months, other news organisations were reporting the same findings leading to a *mobile-first* or *digital-first* approach by journalists (Bradshaw, 2023)².

¹ 'News session' refers to the time spent explicitly engaging with news content (Bentley *et al.*, 2019).

² 'Mobile-first' is whereby news organisations produce news stories with the expectation that they will be read initially on a mobile phone. They therefore need to ensure that the content can be viewed easily and accessibly on smaller screens as opposed to desktop screens (Bradshaw, 2023).

Despite these limitations, Bentley *et al.* (2019) did provide an insight into participants news consumption behaviours regardless of the technology used to access it; though it did not clarify specifically how UK post-millennials were consuming news.

As with broadcast news media, the last decade has seen a huge migration of print to digital, with some organisations becoming online only providers (Permatasari *et al.*, 2018; *The Independent*, 2016). Despite the decline in print sales (Majid, 2023), figures demonstrate that for now, there is still a market for print journalism especially amongst older generations (Ofcom, 2023a). However, the overall consumption of print news is rapidly declining (Adgate, 2021; Quandt and Wahl-Jorgensen, 2022) with it ranked one of the least popular mediums for accessing news by post-millennials. In addition to this, Thorson (2020) highlighted that the development of the Smartphone with its easily tailored content, coupled with reports of reduced engagement with newspapers, may herald the ultimate demise of the traditional print media.

The decline of the traditional newspaper is not the only traditional outlet to be migrating to digital platforms: radio, which subsequently is also reducing in popularity, is also adapting to changing digital ecosystems for example, podcasts (Collins and Bee, 2021). The BBC which is a public service broadcaster, has a remit to ensure that the population is informed and is funded by the public (BBC Trust, 2023). Its very survival is reliant on it being able to do this effectively and as a result, the broadcaster has branched out and requires its journalists to produce content across platforms and is evident in its advertising for journalist practitioners (BBC Careers, 2023). The emphasis is very much now story focussed rather than platform focussed with the stories produced and adapted to suit multiple platforms and multiple audiences (Alysen *et al.*, 2020; Bull, 2015). As previously noted, there is also an emphasis on *digital-first*, with information distributed online before it reaches any of the traditional mediums such as television and radio (Bentley *et al.*, 2019; Bradshaw, 2018; Hernández Guerrero, 2022). This is further demonstrated by the BBC's future plans to become a digital only

provider (Waterson, 2022), signifying that some news organisations are attempting to meet audience demand and developing the digital technology to meet these demands.

Multiple scholars have identified how the digitalisation of the journalism industry has meant that the majority of material is now available online; as a result, audiences have almost instantaneous access to news (Bentley *et al.*, 2019; Tandoc and Vos, 2016; Zhang *et al.*, 2022). Furthermore, accessing the news is easier than ever: consumers are no longer required to make the conscious decision to physically go to the shop to buy a newspaper, nor do they have to wait for an hourly bulletin to hear the latest – they now have 24 hour access whether this is incidental or intentional (Ahmed and Gil-Lopez, 2022; Fletcher and Nielsen, 2018; Thorson, 2020). This provides an insight into RQ4 and will help to inform the theoretical framework of the thesis from a Diffusion of Innovation perspective. This will be delved into deeper in Chapter 3.

In addition to allowing audience greater ease of access to news, online and digital journalism has meant a greater dispersion of news and therefore a greater reach. This was noted by Hernández Guerrero (2022) who formed the methodology for their qualitative study into the treatment of multi-media news by *theGaurdian.com* (A UK news organisation) and *Ediario.es* (a Spanish newspaper) based on the collaboration between the two organisations. It was agreed that *Ediario.es* could translate news articles from *theGaurdian.com* in 2016 rather than try to source and produce the stories themselves. The director of *Ediario.es* stated “in the internet age, collaborations between journalistic projects with common elements can be more productive than competition” (*elDiario.es*, 2016, para. 6); this highlights how news organisations are aware of the reach digital journalism enables and are utilising this to engage with larger audiences. It also provides a rationale for RQ1 with regards to establish how ‘Gen Z’ are accessing the news.

As digital technology has developed, the cost of news production has dramatically reduced over the years (Flaxman *et al.*, 2016); from a distribution perspective, outlets no longer have to produce physical print copies or rely on multiple sites to broadcast news. From a consumer viewpoint, they are no longer required to purchase print copies to access information. As social media has also grown in popularity, consumers can access and share information with hundreds of contacts without much effort on the part of those producing the content (Bakshy *et al.*, 2012; Sharma and Cosley, 2016; Tandoc and Vos, 2016). At the time of this study, YouTube had over 2 billion logged-on users (Omnicores, 2020); Facebook's daily active users had risen to 1.66 billion (Facebook, 2020) and Twitter's monthly active users increased by nine million to 330 million in the first quarter of 2019 (Statista, 2019). However, it is worth noting that the popularity of Twitter as a social media platform declined during the writing of this thesis, with figures dropping to 309 million (Statista, 2023b). It may be speculated that the purchase of the social media platform by Elon Musk and the ensuing changes to its functions may be attributed as the main cause of the decline (Milmo, 2023). Nevertheless, as stated, this is speculation, and it is not within the scope of this study to explore further.

Despite the reduced number of Twitter users worldwide, social media as a whole, is still increasing its users. The rise of mobile devices and smartphone ownership has been widely attributed to the growing success of these outlets (Abi-Jaoude *et al.*, 2020; Rodrigues, 2018). Vernon *et al.* (2018) noted that smartphones had become an essential part of adolescent life. The longitudinal study of 1,101 Australian teenagers (aged 13-16), relied upon self-reported data in the form of a survey over four years. Although the focus of the research was to establish the impact of smartphones and social media on mental health and sleep patterns, the research also found that as age increased, the more likely respondents were to own a smartphone. This correlated with an increase in social media use suggesting a link between the two.

With shares, comments and likes becoming a major factor on what makes a worthwhile news story (Harcup and O'Neill, 2017; Visvizi and Lytras, 2019), social media is quickly becoming a valid option amongst the younger generation for news access (Pitt, 2019). In 2019, there was a 280 million increase in people using social media resulting in almost half (45 percent) of the world's population (Battisby, 2019); as of April 2023, 59.9 percent of the world's population were social media users (Statista, 2023b) demonstrating further growth. The original concept of social media to connect people over distance, has quickly evolved with both consumers and organisations using the platforms for multiple purposes, ranging from forming relationships with others to political point scoring (Dijck, 2013; Naughton, 2018). There are countless social media outlets, and this study by no means presents a definitive list. For the purpose of the research, only those social media outlets which have been placed in the top twenty platforms in terms of the most active users by Statista (2020) will be referred to.

2.2.1 Social Media and News

Social media allows for greater participation within the news cycle process, and this will be reflected upon in more depth in Chapter 3 when discussing the theoretical framework for the thesis; addressing elements of RQ1 with regards to how generation Z engage with the news from an Actor Network theoretical concept (Latour, 1996). At the time of writing this thesis, it is estimated that over half of internet users rely on Facebook to access the news (Marchi and Clark, 2018; Mitchell *et al.*, 2014; Ofcom, 2020). Evidence has also been found to suggest most users of social media have friends who will post articles relating to politics (Halberstam and Knight, 2016) and therefore giving the user access to news they may not have otherwise received. Although this has raised concerns in terms of echo chambers and radicalisation (Eerten and Doosje, 2020; Flaxman *et al.*, 2016; Thorson, 2016), it has also allowed for debates and questioning, subsequently giving audiences an insight to differing viewpoints regardless of if they elect to adopt them or not (Nguyen and Tien Vu, 2019).

It is clear from reports that the popularity of social media as a source for news is rising, and this is more prevalent with each generation (Newman *et al.*, 2023; Ofcom, 2023a). As a result, this has prompted research into the impact that news consumption via social media may have on audiences in terms of trust, belief and in particular, polarization (Del Vicario *et al.*, 2017; Edelman Trust, 2018; Mitchell *et al.*, 2014; Newman and Fletcher, 2017; Usher, 2018). For example, Levy (2021) conducted a field experiment to establish the effect of news consumption through social media amid concerns that algorithms and potential exposure to news organisations with specific political leanings could lead to polarisation. Whilst Levy's study found the potential for polarisation, they also discovered that social media offered the opportunity to greater incidental exposure to different viewpoints. Although Levy's work does raise questions regarding the representation of its demographic (US adults) due to the poor retainment of participants ($n=37,494$ reduced to $n=17,695$), it did maintain a large sample size. Furthermore, the experiment was conducted in three stages where participants were required to complete a survey at each stage after completing an activity such as subscribing or downloading. At each stage, a number of participants would withdraw however the data obtained beforehand was still viable and constructive in aiding this conclusion.

Levy's conclusion, that social media exposes users to other opinions, has been reflected in other studies. Nguyen and Tien Vu (2019) found that due to the participatory nature of social media, users were able to gain different perspective from the comments (whether they chose to accept these comments as truth was another discussion). In addition to this, Ahmed and Gil-Lopez (2022) found as younger generations had been accessing social media for longer, that they had been incidentally exposed to news and political affairs via their news feeds. 'Incidentally exposed' refers to the fact that the consumption of this content was a by-product of their original intention of logging onto the social media platform (Fletcher and Nielsen, 2018; Thorson, 2020).

Despite social media arguably allowing for incidental exposure to multiple perspectives, Levy (2021) argued that it would not change the attitudes of the users. This may be attributed to confirmation bias. Confirmation bias is a cognitive distortion where individuals have a tendency to seek, favour, interpret and recall information which supports their existing beliefs (Jones and Sugden, 2001; Ling, 2020; Modgil *et al.*, 2021). When confirmation bias is at play, people will unconsciously prioritise data that confirms their preconceived notions while disregarding evidence that contradicts their views (Bossetta *et al.*, 2018; Bruns, 2017a; Del Vicario *et al.*, 2017). This was evident during the COVID-19 pandemic where people were reluctant to listen to corrections made by medical professionals such as ‘anti-vaxers’ or those who did not believe mask wearing was a necessity in order to curb the spread of the disease (Modgil *et al.*, 2021). The impact of confirmation bias is that it makes individuals feel validated when perspectives are reinforced, but it does hinder critical thinking by filtering dissenting information. This is similar to the impact of echo chambers. Like confirmation bias, echo chambers hinder critical thinking. Furthermore, they promote misinformation, and societal polarisation as well as an insulated environment where alternative viewpoints are suppressed (Flaxman *et al.*, 2016; Ross Arguedas *et al.*, 2022). Phenomena such as these are more prevalent within social media (Terren and Borge-Bravo, 2021). Echo chambers are defined as a closed ecosystem of ideas and information where people encounter perspectives and opinions which align with their pre-existing beliefs (Cinelli *et al.*, 2020a). Within echo chambers, particular views consistently reverberate, reinforcing existing biases. People are exposed to information that confirms their worldview, arguably narrowing their perspective. The concepts that audiences either seek out news that reflects their own beliefs and are exposed to polarised content via their own digital ecosystems does present cause for concern, especially given the rise of misinformation during the COVID-19 pandemic and the need by news organisations to correct this misinformation due to the speed of developments (Naeem and Bhatti, 2020; Orso *et al.*, 2020; Thorson, 2016). Due to the timing of this research, the global pandemic has had a strong influence on this study and therefore will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

In addition to echo chambers and confirmation bias, social media is used by many public figures as well as journalists as a way of building a professional profile (Gentilviso and Aikat, 2020; Lorenz, 2018). Although building a professional profile has positive implications with increased audience engagement and reach, Mellado and Hermida (2022) produced a conceptual framework for journalistic identity on social media which highlighted potential downfalls. Their model acknowledged that there was now a blurring of the lines between editorial and commercial posing further questions in terms of possible bias and accuracy. As stated, this is not only limited to journalists but may also apply to other public figures and the weaponisation of social media by certain parties (particularly political) suggest it is a potentially unreliable news source (Edenberg and Hannon, 2021; Galeano *et al.*, 2020).

Posetti *et al.* (2019) referred to the weaponsation of social media as the political pressures which to a degree target and arguably harass news organisations, journalists and audiences to conform to ideals or undermine opposing content produced³. The weaponising of social media has been witnessed numerous during multiple elections (Oates, 2020; Singer and Brooking, 2018; Woolley and Howard, 2019). An example was seen during the UK 2019 General election whereby social media was considered a battleground for the political parties; furthermore, traditional forms of media such as television news also went viral due to the multi-platform skills required of journalists today (Domingo *et al.*, 2007; Micó *et al.*, 2013; Pringle, 2019; Rajan, 2019; Satariano and Tsang, 2019).

Weaponisation of social media is not restricted to the UK. Former US President Donald Trump was a huge advocate of social media – frequently posting controversial statements to his accounts and posting over 57,000 tweets in just under twelve years to his Twitter account (Madhani and Colvin, 2021; Stoller and Miller, 2021). Indeed, his success in the 2016 elections was widely attributed to his online presence on social media (Bullman, 2016;

³ It is acknowledged that the weaponisation of social media is not limited to political parties and that there are varying degrees of weaponisation for example, trolling and inciting violence. The political examples have been selected due to its link with news organisations and relevance to trust (which links to RQ2, RQ3 and RQ4)

Johnson, 2016). Furthermore, Trump used social media as a tool for keeping the public informed of his intentions and viewpoints throughout his time in office –during his first impeachment when he posted 600 times to Twitter averaging 58 tweets a day and leading to claims that tech companies were vital in helping Trump to maintain power (Timberg, 2021). Although this does not relate specifically to post-millennial news consumption, it does demonstrate how social media is a powerful tool in disseminating information. Furthermore, it raises questions over the trust individuals have in the content they access via social media despite being aware of the manipulation along with the circulation of fake news and misinformation (Faragó *et al.*, 2020; Kalogeropoulos and Newman, 2017; Prelog and Bakic-Tomic, 2020).

The manipulation of social media has meant that users are beginning to switch off from social media platforms and take breaks in an attempt to care for their own mental wellbeing (Islam *et al.*, 2022). This was demonstrated by Posetti *et al.* (2019) who incorporated fieldwork and interviews. These were identified as outlets with international recognition as providing high quality public interest journalism. Despite this, the organisations which relied heavily on social media had their credibility questioned and there was notable disengagement. This was attributed to the easy spread of fake news on platforms such as Twitter which has been reflected in other studies (Chen *et al.*, 2015; Johnson and Kelling, 2018; Vosoughi *et al.*, 2018).

Regardless of its perceived ‘pitfalls’ the rise of social media has also been identified as one of the main influences of increased post-millennial political awareness (Bennett, 2008; Bimber *et al.*, 2009; Kim and Ball-Rokeach, 2010; Premack, 2018; Yadav and Rai, 2017). Marchi and Clark (2018) conducted a study of high school students which further strengthened the view that post-millennials were more civically minded than previously perceived. The research demonstrated that Generation Z did use social media platforms to share causes, experiences, views and news to enable them to discover a sense of identity achieved by discovering a collective voice (Katz *et al.*, 1973). Subsequently they in turn influence the journalism

industry by becoming actants in the production and distribution of news (Kalogeropoulos, 2019; Latour, 1996; Plesner, 2009). Nevertheless, although a person can share and to a degree publish their own views and opinions, it may arguably be concluded that they do not possess the necessary authority due to lacking position and power, to be credited as a reliable source of information (Reader, 2015).

On the other hand, although lacking position and authority in the traditional sense, post-millennials do tend to engage with and follow those they believe to be relevant and trustworthy (Faragó *et al.*, 2020; Kalogeropoulos and Newman, 2017; Magnusson, 2023), therefore placing their counterparts in a position of power and further blurring the lines between audience and producer (Bruns, 2017b). In addition to this, there is evidence that news organisations are utilising this almost amateur quality by embracing social media platforms such as TikTok which is known for producing 'raw' and 'authentic' videos from younger users which may be perceived as counterparts by 'Gen Z' (Granger, 2022). This links to Strauss and Howe's (2009) Generational Theory (see Chapter 3) which states that Generation Z is characterized by its mistrust of authority; their evidence suggesting that post-millennials are more inclined to trust counterparts than authority figures in general.

2.2.2 Algorithms and News

As previously discussed in Section 2.2.1 when addressing confirmation bias, it is not a new concept that audiences will seek out organisations which reflect their own personal beliefs or values (Flaxman *et al.*, 2016; Thorson, 2016). For example, with the exception of broadcast media in the UK which is regulated by the Ofcom to ensure impartiality (Ofcom, 2023b), print journalism has often reflected a set of values and agendas (Newman and Fletcher, 2017) which are often reflective of their demographic, along with the ideological dispositions of their proprietors. Due to digital developments, algorithms also allow a level of personalisation for the user (Kalogeropoulos, 2019) and it is common practice for news outlets to generate content based

on algorithms; manipulating them to ensure greater audience reach (Harcup and O'Neill, 2017; Tandoc and Maitra, 2018; Visvizi and Lytras, 2019).

Algorithms have been developing and growing for over a century after Ada Lovelace, an English mathematician wrote the first algorithm for a machine in the 1800s (AWIS, 2021; Phillips, 2011). Algorithms were essentially used to work out calculations and to process data (Merriam-Webster, 2020). Now, more advanced algorithms are automated, and they use human characteristics as descriptors such as methods practices by Alan Turing of “memory”, “search” and “stimulus” (Blair *et al.*, 2021, p. 247). Much like people, Social Learning Theory (which is to be discussed in the following chapter) has been adopted to optimise the algorithm. Gong *et al.*, (2014) identified that a social learning algorithm is an effective tool and operates by a virtual society being deployed into the algorithm to help identify the strongest behavioural patterns. In short, this has meant that computers produce automated codes based on the content users have actively engaged with to build a personalised algorithm. As a result, less effort is required when seeking the news which is relevant to the consumer (Lewis *et al.*, 2019).

Although these algorithms are perceived to be personalised (Van den Bulck and Moe, 2018) and by no means suggest audiences do not have access to other content available. Prior research has outlined the need for ease when consuming news and the unlikelihood of audiences pursuing news which is not considered to hold some personal relevance to them (Grice, 1975; Zhang *et al.*, 2022). Concerns have been raised as to the reliance on social media for news, as many of the articles shared and posted have been done so by peers or family whom it could be argued come from similar backgrounds and therefore reinforce the beliefs of the spectator (Flaxman *et al.*, 2016). In addition, stories (sometimes not always accurate) are shared repeatedly, again arguably reinforcing an original belief which may be false (Thorson, 2016).

Zhang *et al.* (2022) gathered usable data from 217 respondents through a self-administered survey. Their study provided an understanding into how factors like relevance, quality perceptions, and information overload shape people's sharing and filtering of news on social media platforms. It highlighted that relevance of news and overloading of information are more important drivers of news curation than perceived quality. This suggests that algorithms play a key role in directing audiences to not disregard news because of information overload or lack of relevance (Bawden and Robinson, 2009; Matthes *et al.*, 2020; Park, 2019).

With the advancement of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and the pace at which digital technology can disseminate information via computers, e-readers and social media; there is strong evidence to support the need to curate the news to avoid negative repercussions on the audience's mental health (Lee *et al.*, 2021; Liu *et al.*, 2022; Matthes *et al.*, 2020; Ramzan *et al.*, 2022). Taddon *et al.* (2022) stated that due to the number of platforms and sources available to audiences now, consumers were experiencing a type of fatigue and indifference to the news after being bombarded with information. 'Information overload' is a term used when the cognitive abilities of the human mind are put under too much strain to process content due to the sheer volume leading to a lethargy and reduction in engagement (Matthes *et al.*, 2020).

This 'information overload' was not considered problematic prior to the internet whereby audiences were only able to access heavily edited news content via newspapers, TV or radio at any one time (Bentley *et al.*, 2019). These had gone through a gatekeeper process whereby the editors and journalists would pick and choose the news content most relevant to the reader (Shoemaker *et al.*, 2001; Tandoc and Vos, 2016). Conversely, despite having all this information available, it is arguably heavily curated either by audiences themselves or by personalised algorithms. Zhang *et al.* (2022, p. 3) study found that audiences would sort through the news and the greater the relevance to the consumer, the less likely they were to avoid the news since "relevancy is a trade-off between acquiring the most recent

information while exerting the least amount of effort”. This is further supported by Priporas *et al.* (2017b) who noted the post-millennial need for quick and easy transactions and processing online. In addition to post-millennials curating the news for themselves, as previously mentioned, algorithms are now sorting and processing information which is relevant to the audience.

Internet users have been (and to a degree, still are) unaware of the algorithm. Eslami *et al.* (2015) found on some occasions, people who engage with social media have felt excluded by friends after no longer being able to see updates on their feeds. However, this was due to their own lack of engagement with said friends and once made aware of the algorithm, consumers have felt more in control and able to engage with the algorithm. With a greater awareness of how algorithms operate, it has been argued that audiences believe that they are more able to manipulate their algorithms to allow them to access content which is relevant to them with greater ease. Nevertheless, Klug *et al.* (2021) examined the user assumptions about the criteria used by TikTok’s algorithm to promote trending videos, validates some assumptions through data analysis (such as the increased interactivity in terms of likes/shares/posts increases trends) while contradicting others, specifically around hashtag usage suggesting that although users are becoming more aware, there is still limited transparency with regards to how algorithms operate (Mohseni and Ragan, 2018).

Although audiences in general, may have a limited awareness of how the algorithm works, as previously mentioned, journalists will actively engage with the algorithm opting for wordier headlines containing commonly used keywords to direct traffic as identified by Petre *et al.* (2019). Furthermore, businesses will seek the services of digital specialists to optimise their presence online and photographers change their compositions to meet the Flickr algorithm (Dick, 2011; Usher, 2018; Ziewitz, 2019). Although some researchers argue that algorithms risk echo chambers and create bubble filters (Cinelli *et al.*, 2020a; Flaxman *et al.*, 2016; Ross Arguedas *et al.*, 2022; Thorson, 2013), Mohseni and Ragans (2018) paper discusses the

challenges posed by fake news and misinformation on social media platforms and reasoned that a clearer and more transparent knowledge of how algorithms are curated would help to resolve this issue. Furthermore, algorithms do not prevent people with counter opinions and messages from engaging with a news story, arguably allowing for more opinions to be heard (Nguyen and Tien Vu, 2019). It is then reliant on the user's own cognitive function to decide whether or not they accept differing opinions or disregard them to support their own belief systems (Alsaad *et al.*, 2018; Modgil *et al.*, 2021).

Although there has been controversy surrounding algorithms in terms of echo chambers, confirmation bias and the spread of fake news (Ling, 2020; Orso *et al.*, 2020; Ross Arguedas *et al.*, 2022; Zhang *et al.*, 2022), a positive of the adoption of the algorithm is that news organisations are able to generate and disseminate more content. This is due to automated journalism being adopted by newsrooms to help cope with the deluge of data which professional journalists have to contend with on a daily basis (Wu *et al.*, 2019). Automated journalism has been defined by scholars as news which is written by computers and requires a minimal amount of human input. It involves "algorithmic processes that convert data into narrative news texts with limited to no human intervention beyond the initial programming" (Carlson, 2015, p. 417). This type of reporting has been proven to be an effective way of disseminating more news from organisations therefore increasing their spread and further enhancing their brand. For example, Associated Press reported that it went from producing 300 financial stories per financial quarter to 3,000 financial stories per financial quarter following its collaboration with Automated Insights (a company which creates automated writing algorithms) and Zack Investment Research (Madigan White, 2015). However, there are concerns over relying on artificial intelligence to produce news content. One such concern would be the possibility of re-publishing libellous content (Lewis *et al.*, 2019). In 2016 Facebook sacked its trending topics team in favour of an algorithm which would automatically recognise popular and trending topics. Unfortunately, this resulted in an erroneous article being highlighted repeatedly (Oremus,

2016). This emphasises the need for human intervention and serves as a warning to organisations not to forsake the more traditional forms of news production.

2.2.3 News and Trust

According to Tof *et al.* (2020, p. 8) “trust is rooted in beliefs about the integrity, professionalism, and motivations of those working in the news media”, it is further influenced by preconceived notions about what is the true state of the world. Some scholars have distinguished between trust and the concept of credibility (Meyer, 1988; Strömbäck *et al.*, 2020; Van Dalen, 2020), whereby trust is defined as confidence in news sources, while credibility focuses on the perceived truthfulness of specific information based on fact. Henke *et al.* (2020, p. 301) noted that trust and credibility are often used interchangeably which in turn, has created what may be described as a “web of overlapping definitions and concepts”.

The theoretical framework of this study will be applying the concept of trust concerning the complex relationship between the actors, trustor and trustee: the willingness of trustor (Generation Z audience) to be vulnerable to the trustee (news media). To clarify, the expectation being that the trustee will perform a role for the trustor (providing accurate information) without the opportunity for the trustor to monitor the trustee (Mayer *et al.*, 1995). This research aims to establish the level of confidence post-millennials have in the news which is distributed and the reasoning for this. Credibility may arguably influence trust and will become more apparent following the interrogation on ‘Gen Z’ news consumption.

The relationship between trust and journalism has evolved significantly over time: In the early days of journalism, trust was closely tied to the credibility and reliability of news sources; readers relied upon newspapers and other media outlets to provide accurate information (Keeble, 2015). Journalists were seen as the gatekeepers of truth, responsible for informing the public and holding those in power to account (Keeble, 2005; Shoemaker and Vos, 2009). Trust was built through consistent reporting, fact checking and

adherence to ethical standards (Wiles, 1965). Nevertheless, over time journalism has faced challenges: scandals, biased reporting and sensationalism has arguably seen an erosion in public trust (Coddington, 2019; Daniele *et al.*, 2023; Jones Patterson and Urbanski, 2006). The rise in fake news and misinformation has significantly affected trust in the journalism industry with misleading stories during critical events or elections leading to scepticism among audiences (Jukes, 2018). During the Brexit process in the UK, media outlets faced accusations of bias, with some newspapers perceived to be taking sides leading to polarisation and mistrust (Reuters Institute, 2016). In addition to this, there was the phone hacking scandal involving the *News of the World* which led to the Leveson Inquiry (2012) in a bid to win back some public trust in the journalism industry as it highlighted the misconduct, privacy invasion and lack of accountability within the sector. A decline in trust has the potential to present a significant barrier for audiences seeking to make informed political choices as well as hold those in power to account (Toff *et al.*, 2020)

Trust and news has historically been an area which has actively been examined by scholars: Khoring and Matthes (2007) established a multidimensional scale of trust in news media confirming that there is a hierarchal factor in relation to trust which consists of lower factors such as topics, facts, accuracy and journalistic assessment; Vanacker and Belmas (2009) research suggested that journalistic excellence coupled with economic success may increase levels in audience trust; Kiousis (2001) survey of 818 randomly selected Texan students found newspapers were ranked as the most trustworthy source of information, followed by online news and then television news. It is worth noting that the surveys were completed in 1998, when the internet was not fully established in society, however, the study did explore factors such as media use and interpersonal discussion as possible influencers of the respondents' credibility judgements. These are just a small sample of studies - there is a myriad of research in relation to trust in news media and it is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore them all. However, this research does acknowledge the

importance of trust in news and will therefore investigate how trust in news media may have been influenced during a digital era.

The rise of the internet in the late 20th Century and early 21st Century has meant that the likelihood of being exposed to misleading or fake news has increased significantly (Lazer *et al.*, 2018). There has been numerous research demonstrating that when people see fabricated news stories, they may come to believe and recall those fabrications (Nash, 2018; O'Connell and Greene, 2017; Sacchi *et al.*, 2007; Strange *et al.*, 2011). Moreover, they are likely to recall this fake information if it supports their own belief systems and ideologies (Frenda *et al.*, 2013; Murphy *et al.*, 2019). Nevertheless, a case study of 1299 UK residents by Greene *et al.* (2021), whereby participants were exposed to false news stories about Brexit, found that those with higher cognitive skills and with more overall knowledge of Brexit were more likely to be analytical of the information and less trusting, therefore they were more critical and more inclined to recognise fake news. Indeed Highton (2009) claimed that political knowledge and in-turn analytical skills when analysing news content, was something which was required at earlier stages in life. Both variables will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 3 when exploring the theoretical framework for the thesis.

It is argued that mistrust in news can significantly affect audiences in different ways. It can create cynicism and disengagement (Lazer *et al.*, 2018), which is why it is imperative to uncover the level of trust post-millennials have in news (RQ2) and why (RQ4). This will help to ensure they are able to make informed and educated choices in the future (Toff *et al.*, 2020). Conversely, Selnes (2024) research did demonstrate that an awareness of fake news did not lead to a decline in news engagement. This is despite a global study by Park *et al.* (2020), which found via a survey distributed in 26 countries, that there was a correlation between the increase in news shared through social media and declining trust in news media by audiences. Park *et al.* (2020) strongly argued that social media was closely linked to the growing mistrust in news and that as more people engage with these platforms, the more likely it will lead to mistrust in news. Similarly,

Majerczack and Strzelecki (2022) determined in their study that the increasing awareness in fake news has led to increased fact checking by audiences therefore contradicting the assumption that audiences struggle to differentiate reliable information from falsehoods. This was further supported by a study of Norwegian teens which found that the awareness of fake news actually increased engagement with mainstream news outlets as they would fact check (Selnes, 2024). This suggests that although there is no dispute that fake news and misinformation has a high reach level, audiences (particularly younger generations) are aware of this and are not passively accepting what may be delivered to them by their algorithm. This was similarly reflected in Fletcher and Park's (2017) research which found that those who had less trust in news would tend to consume news via social media to gain a variety of perspectives and is a concept which has been echoed in other research (Nguyen and Tien Vu, 2019). Furthermore, studies have demonstrated that post-millennials are more apt than older generations at attributing content to the correct news sources (Kalogeropoulos and Newman, 2017), again implying that they have an aptitude for selecting content from reputable sources.

However, regardless of decreased levels of trust, news consumption is not decreasing overall due to the multi-media nature of online journalism and the ability to 'follow-up' on stories. Kovach and Rosenstiel (2011) argued that audience trust is vital to the function of journalism: to enable its consumers to 'make sense' of complex information and current events. This was especially evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. Audiences had a deluge of information, which had to be communicated in a way which would allow them to understand, discuss and debate, which arguably is the key role of a journalist in a democratic society (Dewey *et al.*, 2008). The following section will discuss the significance the global crisis had on not only this research, but news production and consumption.

2.2.4 World Pandemic, Infodemic and News Consumption

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the production of the research presented in this thesis. Initially, it was intended that this study

would contribute to further understanding of how post-millennials consume and engage with news. However, due to the unprecedented nature of the global pandemic, the study was undertaken in extraordinary times which have no doubt shaped the results of the study in important ways.

Nevertheless, the overarching ambition to learn more about 'Gen Z' news consumption, have been fulfilled here, albeit with the proviso that the pandemic significantly impacted the nature of the study. It provided a phenomenological aspect whereby the impact of a global crisis on Generation Z's news consumption could be explored addressing RQ3.

During the first week of lockdown, over 99 percent of people in the UK were accessing the news daily as they sought guidance and information (Broersma and Swart, 2022; Nielsen *et al.*, 2020; Ofcom, 2023b). The spread of COVID-19 and the subsequent world pandemic led to a change in the way social media was used by audiences, with young people spending more hours on the platform due to lockdown and being unable to go out (Arens, 2020; Goodyear, 2020). The early weeks and months of the pandemic significantly impacted news consumption, and this form of social media became the primary source of information for many during the crisis (Kožuh and Čakš, 2021). However, the reliance of much of the material was questionable, with fake news and misinformation spreading faster than before (Cinelli *et al.*, 2020; De Valck, 2020). In March 2020, the French government was forced to tell its citizens that cocaine could not protect against the virus following inaccurate information being shared on social media (Colson, 2020; Gregory, 2020; Spear-Cole, 2020). The United Nations also had to quash further rumours about alcohol along with hot or cold temperatures preventing the virus as well as claims of how and where the illness originated (Doherty, 2020). This establishes RQ3: Did COVID-19 have an overarching influence on Generation Z's trust and engagement with news.

The guidance of health authorities as to where the public may obtain official and reliable information, demonstrates how detrimental the misinformation and conspiracy theories could be to recovery (Mukherjee *et al.*, 2021).

Although guidance was given, a report found that almost half of respondents in the UK felt that they had encountered misinformation of some kind (Ofcom, 2020b), with most of those cases found on social media. The definition of misinformation ranged from poor reporting, propaganda, satire and fake news. Consequently, it led to audiences choosing to obtain information from more traditional and established brands such as *The Guardian* and the *BBC*, to avoid the newly coined 'infodemic': the spread of inaccurate information on a large scale (Cinelli *et al.*, 2020; Lally and Christie, 2020). Misinformation was found to be 88 percent on social media due to the platform's ability to allow material to be posted unedited, unchecked and shared instantaneously, subsequently leading to a 90 percent rise in the use of UK fact checkers (Scott Brennen *et al.*, 2020).

The ability of social media to contribute additional information to the 24/7 news cycle (particularly the repetition of negative news stories) also raised concerns as to the mental wellbeing of consumers (Stainback *et al.*, 2020). The negativity of the news surrounding COVID-19 and the consistent exposure to it gave rise to concerns of a second pandemic: this one a mental-health crisis (Jackson *et al.*, 2022). Social media was not the only platform disseminating negative news about COVID-19. Various studies of headlines and news content found negative sentiments far outweighed the positive with topics such as the financial impact of COVID-19 to death-rates being some of the most publicised articles (Aslam *et al.*, 2020; Basch *et al.*, 2020). Jackson *et al.* (2022, p. 7) study of the emotional responses to news found that those who had relied on social media for news were "significantly more fearful about what might happen" compared to those that used more traditional outlets. The study involved a survey sample of 2,015 UK adult respondents, 27.8 percent of which were post-millennials. Additionally, prior to the pandemic, there was already clear indications that a heavy reliance on social media as a news source led to lower levels of trust in news (Park *et al.*, 2020). However, the Jackson *et al.* (2022) study did not find the hypothesised result that social media news use would be linked to more negative and fewer positive emotional responses compared to other news sources during the COVID-19 pandemic, suggesting it was the content

produced due to COVID-19 rather than the platform being the cause of any negativity.

The global pandemic gave rise to the spread of misinformation and conspiracy theories across media platforms (particularly social media and online news) much like the COVID-19 virus itself. As previously mentioned, the popularity of social media across the globe has been accredited as one of the causes (Statista, 2021b). However, as Nguyen and Catalan-Matamoros (2020, p. 323) correctly state, the spread of the misinformation (much like the COVID-19 virus itself) requires that “much research needs to be done before a full answer can be found regarding why and how something as unthinkable as that could happen”. Although this study does not suggest that Generation Z’s news engagement will be permanently impacted, it does offer an insight into how audiences should be informed and engaged with during a time of national crisis.

2.2.5 ‘Gen Z’ and News

Historically the younger generations have avoided news due to a lack of enjoyment obtained from its consumption (Kleemans *et al.*, 2018) with research from the PEW Research Centre (PEW, 2012) demonstrating that only 29% of 18-34 year-olds were enjoying following the news compared to 45% of those ages between 35-55. The longitudinal study also gave an indication that their news intake will not increase as they get older; a perspective further supported from the developmental psychologist stance that a person’s identity and habits are predominantly formed by the time they reach 19 years of age (Erikson, 1980). This implies that failure to engage young people by news outlets, risks continued alienation throughout adulthood. A further consequence of this is a greater disengagement from civil society (Aalberg *et al.*, 2013; Galston, 2001; Norris, 2000). On the other hand, Marchi (2012) identified that this rather bleak outlook of the relationship between young people and the news could be the result of more traditional views of what is defined as *news*; whereas a more flexible definition of the term as well as attitude as to how it is accessed, provides a much more positive outlook. This perspective is supported by others

(Antunovic *et al.*, 2018; Marchi and Clark, 2018; Martínez-Costa *et al.*, 2019; Singer, 2011)⁴. During the earlier part of this century various studies demonstrated that younger audiences may also have been unintentionally engaging with the news (Baym, 2005; Harrington, 2008; Marchi, 2012). For example, satirical TV shows and satires can impart news in much the same way as news feeds and blogs and can be a vital alternative source of information (Brewer and McKnight, 2017; Brugman *et al.*, 2020).

The shift from traditional news outlets was witnessed in the early noughties with young adults who watched satire news TV shows demonstrating more political knowledge as well as being savvier about national and international affairs (NAES, 2004). The term *knowledge enabling* as opposed to *informational* has been used for these types of news providers, as they allow audiences to initially engage with the information gaining a superficial view which they may explore further should they wish to do so (Baym, 2015; Harrington, 2008; Loggins, 2011). The term *Knowledge enabling* does not need to be exclusively applied to satires and mock TV but may also be applied to other outlets such as Twitter, newsfeeds, blogs Apps and so forth, whereby audiences are given a brief overview of information which they are free to delve into further. Additionally, younger audiences are considered comfortable in using multiple platforms to engage with the news at any one time (Bakker and de Vreese, 2011; Chyi and Chadha, 2012; Costera Meijer, 2007; Diehl *et al.*, 2019; Edgerly *et al.*, 2018b; Schlesinger and Doyle, 2015). This multi-media news engagement has been easier due to the vast array of news organisations and devices by which audiences may consume the content (Gottfried, 2017). Never have audiences had so many providers of news and as a result, so much choice; multi-platform news consumption is widely accepted as a norm for many audiences (Bakker and de Vreese, 2011; Edgerly *et al.*, 2018b; Gentilviso and Aikat, 2020). It is as of yet unclear how Generation Z elect to engage with these platforms and consume news giving rise to RQ1. It is also unclear the impact this multi-media news consumption has on the audience's levels of trust and overall

⁴ This coincides with the preliminary study of this research whereby most participants expressed the view that most of the information they accessed may be classed as news. This study may be found in A2

attitudes to the information they are receiving (Diehl *et al.*, 2019; Ksiazek *et al.*, 2010) and this will be addressed with RQ2 and RQ4.

Barnhurst and Wartella (1998, 1991) conducted two separate studies into the news consumption of American college students in the nineties (Generation Y) and found that parental engagement with newspaper and television news did influence the news consumption behaviours of their children (Addressing RQ4). The studies were qualitative and relied on biographical essays from respondents who were asked to recall early news consumption. A limitation to the studies were that they are not a full representation of all young adults in America at the time; wealth gaps were not considered and respondents along with the parents were educated at college level showing a lack of diversity. Never-the-less, the research gave clear indicators that the popularity of more traditional platforms were wavering even in the 1990's, with respondents stating the news accessed via these platforms was not wholly relevant to them and often boring. In addition to this Gentilviso and Aikat's (2020) meta-analytical research of sixteen key studies between 2016-2019 portrayed 'Gen Z as native digital users who are abandoning legacy news/traditional news platforms in favour of more immersive, interactive and visual digital/social media experiences that better align with their values and participatory tendencies when it comes to news. This signifies that younger generations are not abandoning news but are accessing and engaging it in less traditional ways. Raeymaeckers' (2007) surveyed 1200 young Belgians to establish their overarching attitudes to newspapers. They found that the respondents were not rejecting newspapers or other traditional platforms (Costera Meijer, 2007; Flamingo, 2023; Marchi 2012) but felt that they were formatted in a 'clumsy' way without the foresight to cater for audiences long-term, adapting appropriately with digital times. Livingstone (2002, p. 3) summarised it well stating that younger generations are often the "one which leads the way in the use of news media" and given today's multi-media society, it is the civic responsibility of the journalist to ensure audiences are informed accurately regardless of platform (Harcup, 2023; Seemiller and Grace, 2019).

There is limited research which focuses on post-millennials, and studies that do, such as Gentilviso and Aikat (2020), have data that was gathered pre-pandemic and the respondents were much younger. To date, there is limited empirical research around this generation and its news consumption despite the prospect that within ten years, Generation Z will become the next market leaders in terms of consumption and decision making within society (Seemiller and Grace, 2019). At the time of completing this thesis, the most recent report from Ofcom identified that news consumption varied between different generations, with younger age groups more likely to access news via the internet or on social media (Ofcom, 2023a). Although it is difficult to accurately compare with previous years, due to the disruption on how data was gathered during the global pandemic as opposed to now and the years building up to COVID-19, there were clear indicators that the popularity of social media and the internet was rising prior to this report (Jigsaw Research, 2022; Ofcom, 2020, 2019). Nevertheless, this will be clarified with RQ1.

Part of this generational shift in preferences is attributed to the birth of the smartphone. As noted, smartphones have been seen as a vital part of adolescent life (Rodrigues, 2018; Vernon *et al.*, 2018). This, coupled with social media has changed how people are communicating, entertaining and informing themselves. In their study of 415 Generation Z college students between 2018 and 2019, Niaz Ahmed (2020) highlights 'Gen Z's' heavy usage of smartphones and social media platforms for accessing news content, with many being exposed to fake news stories circulating on those platforms. Again, this was conducted pre-pandemic and could arguably be dated, lacking longitudinal data to track potential changed over time. Furthermore, the author acknowledges that the sample was non-random, from a single institution sample causing limitation in the broad generalisation of the findings.

Regardless, an increase in social media usage by 'Gen Z' has been observed, with 90 percent identified as having a profile in 2018 (Statista, 2018a). Although it has been identified that the increase is slowing down, it

is still increasing (Tankovska, 2021). The reasoning behind this increase has been attributed by some researchers to a condition called 'FOMO' (Fear Of Missing Out). Buglass *et al.* (2017) surveyed 506 UK residents aged between 13-77 years old and suggested that while 'FOMO' was a key motivator in engaging with social media, it also posed detrimental impacts to mental wellbeing. Similar findings are not limited to the UK, for example, Oberst *et al.* (2017) conducted a similar study involving 1,468 Spanish-speaking Latin American Social Network Site (SNS) users aged between 16 and 18 years of age. The findings concurred that 'FOMO' was an incentive for social media engagement and arguable a causation for poor mental health (addressing RQ4). Both studies found that social media engagement was less prevalent in older ages further supporting previous reports that news consumption through social media and online is increasing in popularity with each generation (Newman *et al.*, 2023; Ofcom, 2023a). As discussed in Section 2.2.4, concerns have been raised with regards to the volume of misinformation circulating on social media during the COVID-19 pandemic and the possible impact on mental health (Aslam *et al.*, 2020; Cinelli *et al.*, 2020b; Orso *et al.*, 2020). In addition to this, the change in social media habits during pandemic (Broersma and Swart, 2022) and how audiences (particularly Generation Z) were accessing information, does raise questions as to the attitudes post-millennials may have toward the content they are accessing.

Although not all the studies mentioned directly focus on post-millennials as a demographic, there have been further reports that demonstrate 'Gen Z' consumers are accessing the news via social media, smartphones and through news organisation's websites (Anspach, 2017; Flamingo, 2023; Ofcom, 2020). Furthermore, there is evidence to show that Generation Z actively uses social media to share information and promote change (RQ1). Reinikainen *et al.* (2020a) conducted an online survey of 1,534 Finnish and British 15-24 year-olds which reflected that post-millennials would actively use social media to share information and promote change. For example, American High School students fought against gun violence using the hashtag *#NeverAgain* (Alter, 2018); school children protested over China's

ruling of Hong Kong (Khan *et al.*, 2019) and the #BeKind movement was launched as a direct result of the suicide of Caroline Flack – a television presenter renowned for presenting Love Island which is a show predominantly aimed at the under thirties (Smith, 2019).

Furthermore, Generation Z are demonstrating a tendency to hold organisations to account and possess a predisposition to expect more from an outlet's motives than the prospect of financial gain (Edelman Trust, 2018). This has been further reflected by some brands adopting what is known as 'corporate social advocacy' or 'corporate activism' (Dodd and Supa, 2014; Olkkonen and Jaaskelainen, 2019). An example of this was observed in the Gillette campaign (which was inspired by the #MeToo movement) calling for a new form of positive masculinity. The campaign provoked an emotive response and subsequently generated positive and negative feedback on social media (Reinikainen *et al.*, 2020a). The final example may be perceived as 'greenwashing' whereby an organisation misleadingly advocates environmental or social issues to gain a positive response from audiences (De Freitas Netto *et al.*, 2020).

McLuhan (2003, p. 14) stated "the medium is the message" suggesting that the audience is passive and despite an organisation's ulterior motive, it is the final production which delivers the message. However, another interpretation is dismissive of this concept and emphasises the power of the audience. Agreeably, the organisation has an incentive to advocate causes, nonetheless, this is echoing social beliefs and perceptions, further highlighting issues which matter to society. All of these actions have helped to change public perceptions as well as hold to account those in power, clearly indicating that post-millennials are taking an active interest in the news and are part of the news production process. This again justifies the need for journalism practitioners to ensure they are catering appropriately for Generation Z.

Post-millennials have displayed a keen interest in news which is directly relevant to them and important to them (Flamingo, 2023; Kalogeropoulos,

2019; Zhang *et al.*, 2022), furthermore, as traditional platforms such as print and radio decline in popularity (Jigsaw Research, 2022; Waterson, 2020) engagement via other platforms by news organisations is vital in ensuring society continues to be informed in the future by reliable sources.

2.2.5.1 'Gen Z' Trust in News

Post-millennials are fully aware of the concept of clickbait and the motive of news organisations to generate as much traffic to content as possible (Faragó *et al.*, 2020; Kalogeropoulos and Newman, 2017; Magnusson, 2023). As previously mentioned, this has also been reflected in other research such as the Reinikainen *et al.* (2020a) study of organisational listening on social media whereby competent listening by organisations of its target audience, allows for higher levels of trust in the organisation sharing information on social media. The concept of organisational listening was first introduced by Macnamara (2016) and is similar to that of Maben and Gearhart's (2018) competent organisational listening. Both encompass the theory that communication between organisations and consumers/audiences through social media presents the opportunity not just for the organisation to speak to the audience but for the audience to actively engage with the organisation. By listening to consumers, media outlets are able to construct stronger relationships as well as build trust through reflecting the market's own belief systems (Jones and Sugden, 2001; Ling, 2020). This in turn is believed to have a positive impact on society as a whole, with more participation in political and civil matters (Cayetano, 2016; Macnamara, 2018; Putnam, 2004).

Although arguably a different dynamic, similar organisations, 'Gen Z' have listened to social debates and launched campaigns such as the school strikes in 2019, where teenagers across the UK walked out on lessons in protest over climate change (Barbiroglio, 2019; Ostrander, 2019; Taylor *et al.*, 2019). This was following inspiration from Greta Thunberg. Again, this further demonstrates the generation's competencies and knowledge regarding the internet. It also relates to RQ1: How are post-millennials consuming and engaging with the news? And RQ4: What are the reasons

behind post-millennial engagement and trust towards the news? – The sharing of campaigns and information demonstrates Generation Z's active participation in disseminating information. Moreover, it provides some indication as to why they may select certain topics over others (relevance and confirmation bias).

Although Generation Z's knowledge and understanding of the internet allows for greater levels of engagement in news, this knowledge is also accompanied by an understanding of its limitations and subsequently an increase in suspicion of content. It is widely accepted that trust in the media has decreased globally (Strömbäck *et al.*, 2020). Several studies have demonstrated multiple justifications for this reduction in trust. Research by Gallup, which is a global analytics and advice firm, found that only 34 percent of Americans trusted the mass media to produce “fully, accurately and fairly” news content (Brenan, 2022). Interestingly, the study did demonstrate that political affiliations did appear to influence the level of trust in news media with 70 percent of Democrats expressing trust in contrast to only 14 percent of Republicans. This arguably is to be expected given the context of the publication: the controversy surrounding the 2020 presidential elections and allegations of vote rigging by Trump (Hern, 2019).

It is widely accepted that parties influence news distribution (Barthel and Mitchell, 2017; Shultziner and Stukalin, 2021; Tully *et al.*, 2020). Moreover, Barbera *et al.* (2019) found that those considered to be legislators, are more likely to be influenced by supporters with regards to the issues they raise as opposed to vice versa. This echoes Reinikainen *et al.* (2020a) findings surrounding organisational listening. The conclusions of the study were that organisations supply what the consumer wants to maintain engagement and loyalty.

Although the findings of the Gallup study (Brenan, 2022) reflect US society's levels of trust, it is understood that overall, news organisations do have an agenda. While broadcast media in the UK is regulated by Ofcom's Broadcasting Code which demands impartiality (Ofcom, 2023), print media is

not regulated by the same body and therefore is not required to present balance (IPSO, 2021), suggesting the conclusions from the Gallup study (Brenan, 2022) are applicable and may be applied to UK post-millennials.

In addition, it was found in earlier studies that Generation Z placed higher value on user generated content⁵ rather than material generated by organisations which they interpret as having a level of bias in terms of company motivations (Francis and Hoefel, 2018a; Herrando *et al.*, 2019). A report following the pandemic demonstrated that post-millennials were more interested in hearing the 'viewpoints' of those they believed to have authority on a topic via blogs and social media rather than engage with a 'traditional' news story from a news organisation (Flamingo, 2023; Zhang *et al.*, 2022).

Another notion behind the mistrust post-millennials may have of news (as previously mentioned in the introduction to the thesis) is their exceptional competence and knowledge of a digital world (Beall, 2017; Iqbal, 2018; Rothman, 2016; Seemiller and Grace, 2019) (RQ4). The generation has been exposed to digital technology since birth (Priporas *et al.*, 2017a; Turner, 2005; Twenge, 2017). Many from Generation Z remain in constant contact with digital technology via a mobile phone, information boards, tablets or laptops and consider it a vital part of day-to-day living (Bucuta, 2015; Magnusson, 2023; Turner, 2015). As a result, they have greater expectations of digital technology than older generations who have experienced its limitations (Southgate, 2017). This was again observed in the organisational listening outlined by Reinikainen *et al.* (2020).

Furthermore, 'Gen Z' will seek to manipulate digital technology to meet their own requirements (Klug *et al.*, 2021; Mohseni and Ragan, 2018). This has led to digital technology and in turn the journalism industry providing instant updates. Although instant updates are beneficial in attracting and maintaining audience interest, particularly if they may be accessed conveniently and with ease this also limits the time given for confirmation

⁵ User generated content refers to online material that is produced by members of the public rather than professional organisations (Mitsopoulou *et al.*, 2023).

and fact checking; it can also cause an element fatigue with the sheer deluge of news (Bawden and Robinson, 2009; Groot Kormelink and Klein Gunnewiek, 2022; Wiederhold, 2020).

Despite this, there have been conflicting reports with regards to the trust audiences have of the news they are accessing. A report by Reuters Institute (2021) found that 36 percent of people (although not specifically post-millennials) trusted the news they accessed; this was up eight percent from before the start of the global pandemic (March 2020). On the other hand, the Endelman Trust Barometer⁶ (2021) found that trust was lower due to a year of repeated misinformation. It must be noted however, that the sample for this was focussing on multiple generations rather than a cross-section of society therefore did not consider any discrepancies between generations.

2.3 Chapter Summary

Research into previous studies has been conducted exploring overall news consumption and attitudes towards news in terms of trust. The findings demonstrated that there is a knowledge gap with regards to a focus being placed on Generation Z as a demographic and there are clear indicators that there is need for this to be explored further.

The chapter has identified multiple studies and reports that have recognised the rise in the popularity of social media and online platforms as a source for news; furthermore, there are indicators that younger generations have a stronger inclination toward these platforms (a reasoning for this is due to Generation Z being born in an era where the internet was well established). However, it is not clear why some technologies are favoured over others and there is limited research into the role (or engagement) post-millennials play in the news production process. Furthermore, the data collected in relation to Generation Z's news consumption focussed on samples which were

⁶ An annual survey that purports to measure whether people around the world trust businesses, governments, NGOs and the media.

adolescence and prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, signifying the need for further research.

Post-millennials are technologically savvy and have high expectations. Research has also suggested that 'Gen Z' will place higher levels of trust in user generated content than that of specific organisations. This does raise questions with regards to the trust Generation Z have of the information they are consuming and their justifications for it.

COVID-19 has had a prominent role during this research, it would therefore be amiss not to address the possible impacts it may have on the news consumption habits and attitudes of post-millennials. Although studies have indicated that there will not be a lasting impact in terms of mental well-being, this does not mean that news engagement did not change, and attitudes alter during the global crisis.

Each section has contributed to the research questions for this thesis: Section 2.2.1 established that there is a myriad of ways in which audiences may choose to consume news. Although the rise of online platforms has been noted (Newman *et al.*, 2023; Ofcom, 2023a), there has been limited focus on how post-millennials consume news and why, which contributes to the first research question. Similarly, Section 2.2.1 identified the role social media has played in the news production process (Marchi and Clark, 2018; Mitchell *et al.*, 2014; Ofcom, 2020), underpinning the positives and negatives of the platform with regards to confirmation bias, echo chambers and linking to trust addressing RQ2 and RQ4. Furthermore, it highlighted the participatory nature of the platform (Nguyen and Tien Vu, 2019). Although these Sections do provide an understanding of how audiences may be consuming and engaging with news, there has been no defining evidence relating to Generation Z's news consumption or engagement. This leads to the first research question (RQ1): how are post-millennials consuming and engaging with the news?

Contributing further to the rationale behind RQ1, is Section 2.2.2. The discussion surrounding algorithms, highlighted the requirement of curation for audiences to avoid information overload (Matthes *et al.*, 2020). However, it also presented the argument that 'Gen Z' are consuming the news in some way (RQ1) and that this news is most likely being accessed via a less traditional platform. This provides a grounding for the theoretical framework as to why they may elect to engage with certain platforms over others.

Sections 2.2.3 and 2.2.5.1 highlighted the part trust must play in news consumption. Trust and news have been an ongoing discussion for many years, but now that the world is in a digital era, the circulation of fake news along with misinformation on an accelerated scale, means that trust is again at the forefront of journalism research (Majerczak and Strzelecki, 2022; Niaz Ahmed, 2020; Selnes, 2024). As established, Generation Z has been born in an era where digital technology is established and have not had to deal with the mistakes or 'quirks' of its development like previous generations (Palfrey and Gasser, 2011), therefore the second research question is required (RQ2): What is the level of trust post-millennials have in the news? However, Generation Z are aware of limitations which may also impact news (Palfrey and Gasser, 2011; Turner, 2015).

Section 2.2.5 highlighted how historically, younger generations have not been interested in the news (Kleemans *et al.*, 2018). However, there is clear evidence via reports and research that post-millennials are civically minded and are engaging with the news, just in different ways (Antunovic *et al.*, 2018; Marchi and Clark, 2018; Martínez-Costa *et al.*, 2019; Singer, 2011). It is understandable that given that 'Gen Z' are arguably digital natives (Gentilviso and Aikat, 2019; Palfrey and Gasser, 2011), that they would elect to engage with digital technology more. What is unclear is why post-millennials have elected to consume and engage with news in certain ways. A discussion surrounding possible variables and a conceptual framework for the characteristics of Generation Z will be conducted in Chapter 3, however, the lack of justification for engagement and trust in news by post-millennials within the literature reviewed does produce the fourth research question

(RQ4): What are the reasons behind post-millennial engagement and trust towards news?

Similar to Sections 2.2.3 and 2.2.5.1, Section 2.2.4 emphasised the *infodemic* of COVID-19 and the circulation of misinformation and fake news at an unprecedented speed. As identified within the chapter, during this period, news consumption increased, which is not unsurprising during a time of global crisis. What is not clear, is the impact that this may have had on the trust and engagement with news of a Generation which is already heavily invested with social media (the main platform used to disseminate information during the pandemic). This leads to the third research question (RQ3), Were the levels of trust and engagement with news by post-millennials influenced during the COVID-19 Pandemic?

Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a rationale and detailed exposition of the conceptual framework for the thesis. The chapter articulates how each theory helps to explain or predict post-millennial news consumption, engagement and trust in news. The theories adopted for this study occupy a conceptual theoretical hierarchy, with Generational Theory (Strauss and Howe, 1991) providing the primary broad theoretical basis. This is then refined via three of the theories: Actor Network Theory (ANT) (Latour, 1996); Diffusion of Innovation (DoI) (Rogers, 2003) and Social Learning Theory (SLT) (Bandura, 1977). Such a conceptual framework, combined with the data collected and analysis allows academics to acknowledge and understand the multifaceted ways in which Generation Z engage with news in the UK at a specific period. In developing this multidimensional approach, it is important to distinguish what role each theory plays in this complex matrix and the following discussion provides an overview of these roles, before moving on to examine each in more detail.

Generational Theory (Strauss and Howe, 1991) provides a foundational lens for understanding the shared characteristics and behaviours of Generation Z, shaped by their upbringing in a digitally saturated environment. This theory is particularly relevant to RQ1, as it contextualises their preference for digital and social media platforms over traditional news sources. It also informs RQ2 by recognising that generational experiences influence attitudes toward authority, institutions, and media credibility. Furthermore, Generational Theory is instrumental in addressing RQ3, as it considers how formative global events, such as the pandemic, shape the values, behaviours, and media habits of generational cohorts. The pandemic, as a defining moment for Generation Z, likely intensified their reliance on digital news sources while simultaneously influencing their trust in those sources.

Actor-Network Theory (ANT) (Latour, 2005) reconceptualises news consumption and engagement as networked processes involving both human and non-human actors. ANT is instrumental in addressing RQ1, as it captures the dynamic interactions between Generation Z, digital platforms, algorithms, and peer networks. These interactions shape how news is accessed, interpreted, and shared, positioning Gen Z as co-constructors of the news cycle (Nawarathne and Storni, 2023; Wei, 2024).

Diffusion of Innovation Theory (DoI) (Rogers, 2003) explains how new technologies and platforms are adopted and diffused within social systems. This theory is central to Research Question 4, as it highlights the role of early adopters, peer influence, and perceived usefulness in shaping Gen Z's media behaviours. It also helps explain the rapid uptake of emerging platforms like TikTok and the selective trust placed in certain sources over others.

Social Learning Theory (SLT) (Bandura, 1977) complements this by focusing on how individuals learn behaviours through observation, imitation, and social interaction. Applied to RQ4, it suggests that Generation Z's news habits are influenced by the behaviours of peers, influencers, and family members, particularly in online environments. This theory underscores the importance of social context in shaping not only what news is consumed but also how it is interpreted and trusted.

Together, these theories provide a comprehensive framework for analysing the generational, technological, and social dimensions of news consumption and trust among Generation Z.

Figure 3.1 demonstrates how each theoretical concept is applied to each of the four research questions:

- RQ1: How are Generation Z consuming and engaging with the news?
- RQ2: What are the levels of trust post-millennials have in the news they are consuming?

- RQ3: Were the trust levels of news of post-millennials, along with their overall news consumption impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- RQ4: What are the reasons behind Generation Z's consumption, engagement and trust?

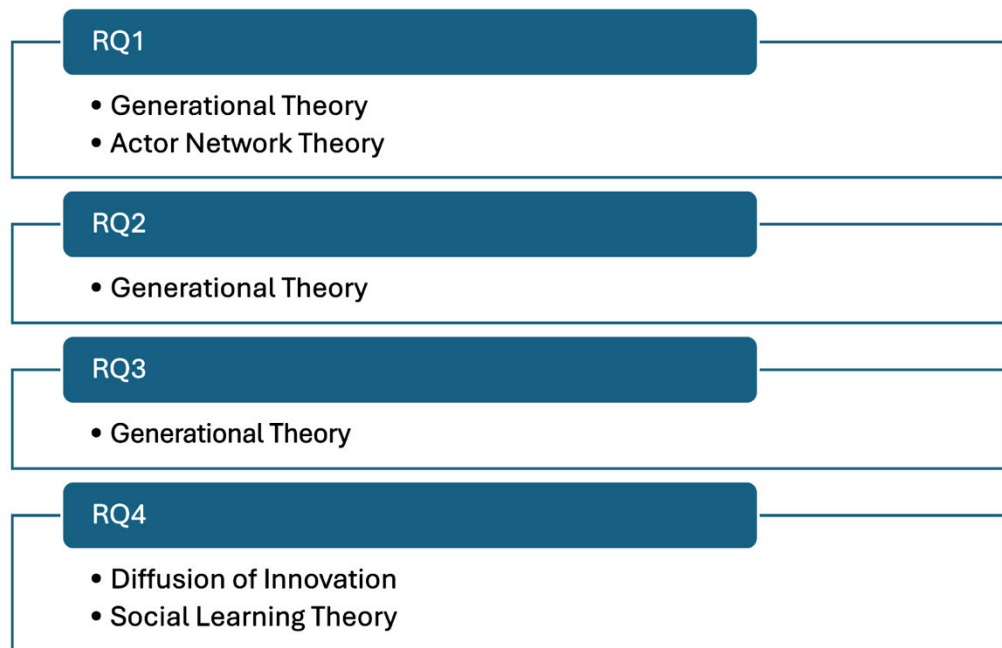


Figure 3.1: An illustration mapping how each theory within the framework will inform each research question

This chapter analyses each of the theoretical concepts and the independent variables which inform the conceptual hierarchy of the theoretical framework for this study. Section 3.2 is an explanation of the theoretical framework, identifying the structure of the conceptual hierarchy and how this addresses each of the research questions. This is then followed by Section 3.3 which focuses on Generational Theory. The section provides a rationale for Generational Theory being the primary theoretical approach for the thesis. Section 3.4 provides a further rationale for the focus of Generation Z. In addition, it explores the five developmental theories and identifies why Social Learning Theory is an applicable theory for the study. Furthermore, it discusses the first of the three independent variables identified: parental influence. Section 3.5 introduces the concept of Actor Network Theory and

how this has been applied by scholars to journalism. ANT allows for a characterisation of 'Gen Z's' role within the news cycle and addresses RQ1. Diffusion of Innovation is presented in Section 3.6. The section provides a conceptual framework as to why certain platforms are adopted by post-millennials over others. It addresses RQ4 by helping to predict how innovations in digital technology spread and why society elects to adopt some over others. The section provides a scaffold for Section 3.7 which identifies two of the independent variables which inform SLT: socio-economic status and educational level. The section analyses how previous research has found the variables to influence behaviours and attitudes.

To surmise, this chapter discusses how each of the four key theories along with the independent variables, help to explain or predict post-millennial news consumption and attitudes towards news. It also clarifies why the researcher elected to apply these theories to the study.

3.2 Theoretical Framework: Conceptual Hierarchy

The theoretical framework for this study is contrived of four theories: Generational Theory (Strauss and Howe, 1991a), Actor Network Theory (ANT) (Latour, 1996), Diffusion of Innovation (Rogers, 2003) and Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977). Of the four theories, Generational Theory is the primary theoretical concept of which ANT, the Diffusion of Innovation and SLT inform.

The variables identified in this study are parental modelling, educational level and socio-economic status. This chapter discusses the links between the variables and theorises that these are three of the main influencers in SLT. Parental behaviours have been proven influences in learnt behaviours and media habit formation. However, parents are arguably restricted by their own education and socio-economic status, as will their children. Furthermore, it is acknowledged by scholars that society tends to associate with those of similar backgrounds (Jansen *et al.*, 2022; Wright and Lander, 2003) in terms of socio-economic status and education, allowing for an element of peer influence. However, this theoretical framework does not

offer a full explanation of peer influence – this would require further exploration and additional study. After these traits have been acquired through SLT, they then help to justify the adoption of media platforms (Diffusion of Innovation) and the level of trust and engagement with news by post-millennials (ANT), helping to address the four research questions for this thesis⁷.

Finally, these then establish the characteristics of Generation Z regarding news consumption, engagement and trust. It embraces the ethos of Strauss and Howe's (1991) Generational Theory that post-millennials, like other generations, have characteristics which belong to them specifically.

The following sections of this thesis discuss the key theoretical concepts and variables identified in this framework and provide a rationale for their implementation within the study. Furthermore, they address how the theories help to address the previously identified research questions.

3.3 Generational Theory

Generational Theory provides a broad ranging insight into how shared experiences shape generational consciousness and influence societal behaviours (Strauss and Howe, 1991a). To focus more sharply on these elements, this study will be drawing on the aforementioned theories to provide specific details required to address the research questions.

Strauss and Howe's (1991b) Generational Theory offers a compelling framework for understanding the cyclical patterns of generational dynamics and their impact on historical events. At its core, this theory posits that history unfolds in a series of recurring cycles, each lasting approximately 80–100 years, known as a *saeculum*. Within these *saecula*, four distinct generational archetypes emerge, each characterized by unique values,

⁷ RQ1: How are Generation Z consuming and engaging with the news? RQ2: What are the levels of trust post-millennials have in the news they are consuming? RQ3: Were the trust levels of news of post-millennials, along with their overall news consumption impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic? RQ4: What are the reasons behind Generations Z's consumption, engagement and trust in news?

attitudes, and responses to societal challenges: Prophets; Nomads; Heroes and Artists. These archetypes align with a 'turning' which lasts approximately 20-25 years (a generation) and usually corresponds to a specific social, political and economic climate. Generation Z have been identified as the 'Artist' archetype, signifying their characteristics of embodying creativity, non-conformity, and desire to leave a lasting mark on the world. This was previously detailed in Chapter 2, were discussed along with the need for post-millennials to find their own identities (Kühne, 2019; Simon *et al.*, 1995; Tajfel, 1974).

Howe and Strauss' Generational Theory (1991b) has drawn upon earlier theoretical approaches that bring attention to the role of generational differences in understanding social phenomena. In 1928, Karl Mannheim published an essay titled 'The Problem of Generations' (Mannheim, 1952). The key points of his generational theory acknowledged that generations were influenced by socio-historical environments during their youths giving rise to RQ3 regarding the impact COVID-19 may have had on 'Gen Z's news consumption and trust. Mannheim also argued that shared experiences shape social cohorts, which in turn influence future generations.

Subsequently, Twenge's (2013) view on generational change emphasises cultural change beyond major events. For example, it considers broader cultural shifts over time and highlights the differences between life today and life in previous decades. Although there are clear cross-overs between the generational theories, they all possess the same commonality: that each generation share some (although not a definitive list) of characteristics, which are influenced by outside influences such as society and historical events (Mannheim, 1952; Strauss and Howe, 2009; Taneja *et al.*, 2018; Twenge, 2013; Vozab, 2020).

Strauss and Howe's Generational Theory has garnered both praise and criticism within academia. Despite its imaginative insights, sceptics have argued that it is based upon limited empirical research, and it does not have the longevity to prove the cycle of turning - consequently it does not stand up

to rigorous scholarly scrutiny (Giancola, 2006; Turchin, 2017). In addition, Strauss and Howe's view that generational groupings are more important than social groupings such as socio-economic status, race, and education is considered by some another limitation as it does not consider the influence of external variables (Hoover, 2009; Lamb, 1991). Deal (2007) disputed that there are few differences between generations and subsequently found that the concept of generational gaps was a myth (Therefore RQ4 is justified for this thesis). However, the focus for Deal's study was the relationship between older and younger employees and the values they held within the workplace. Deal's research is extremely contextual and focusses on one social grouping formed within the workplace, it does not consider attitudes and beliefs outside of the workplace where generational differences may be more apparent and have been identified in other research (Brodeur Partners, 2018; Bucuta, 2015; Statista, 2020).

That noted, it does emphasise the significance that social groupings have in shaping attitudes, behaviour and overall characteristics. Strauss and Howe were not dismissive of the contextual challenges each generation faces such as race, socio-economic status and education. Therefore, Generational Theory focusses on the subsequent outcomes some of these variables may have on each generation. This was considered when constructing the Conceptual Theoretical Framework for this thesis, which is used in conjunction with quantitative data to analyse and address the research questions. It must be noted that the theoretical framework of this thesis embodies the concept of Strauss and Howe's Generational Theory: that each generation is characterised by outside influences. However, it does not confirm nor deny the prospect that generational turning cycles are repetitive. This is an area which would require further longitudinal data.

Generational Theory offers a valuable framework for understanding how shared historical, cultural, and technological experiences shape the attitudes, behaviours, and media practices of distinct age cohorts. In media and communication studies, this theory is particularly useful for analysing how different generations engage with media technologies, platforms, and

content. It posits that individuals born within the same generational cohort are likely to develop similar worldviews and communication preferences due to the formative events and conditions they experience during youth (Strauss and Howe, 1991).

This theoretical lens is especially relevant in the context of Generation Z, a cohort defined by their digital nativity and constant connectivity (Palfrey and Gasser, 2011). Generational Theory helps explain why Gen Z tends to favour interactive, mobile-first platforms and why they may exhibit different levels of trust in traditional news institutions compared to older generations. It also provides a basis for exploring how major global events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, have uniquely shaped their media habits and trust in information sources, offering insight into both continuity and change in media consumption patterns (Knight, 2009). Moreover, Generational Theory enables researchers to move beyond individual-level explanations and consider broader socio-cultural patterns that influence media engagement (such as socio-economic status, parental influence and educational level). While the theory has been critiqued for overgeneralisation, its application in media studies remains valuable for identifying generational trends and informing targeted communication strategies.

Generation Z, having grown up in a digitally saturated environment, naturally gravitates toward mobile-first, interactive, and socially embedded news formats (Antunovic *et al.*, 2018; Chan-Olmsted *et al.*, 2013). Their preference for platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube, and their tendency to engage with peer-shared content, can be understood as generationally influenced behaviours. Twenge (2023) reinforces this by arguing that technological change is a primary driver of generational differences, particularly in how younger generations interact with media and information. Generational Theory, therefore, helps explain the distinctive ways in which Gen Z interacts with news media, directly informing RQ1.

In relation to RQ2, which explores the levels of trust Generation Z places in the news they consume, Generational Theory again offers valuable insights.

This cohort has come of age during a period marked by widespread misinformation, political polarisation, and declining trust in traditional institutions (Allcott et al., 2019). As a result, they may exhibit greater scepticism toward mainstream news outlets and instead place trust in alternative sources, such as influencers or peer networks, that align more closely with their values and lived experiences. Twenge (2023) notes that generational shifts in trust and authority are closely tied to broader cultural changes, including the rise of individualism and digital connectivity. Generational Theory helps contextualise these trust dynamics as part of a broader generational shift in how authority and credibility are perceived in the digital age.

Generational Theory is also instrumental in addressing RQ3, which examines whether the COVID-19 pandemic impacted Generation Z's news consumption and trust. The theory emphasises the role of formative global events in shaping generational identity and behaviour. The pandemic, as a defining moment for Gen Z, likely intensified their reliance on digital news sources while also exposing them to a flood of conflicting information. This experience may have altered their trust in both traditional and digital media. Twenge (2023) highlights that such events can accelerate generational change, particularly in how young people perceive risk, authority, and information reliability. Generational Theory thus provides a framework for understanding how such a significant event could reshape the media habits and trust levels of this cohort.

3.4 Developmental Theory

As the thesis explores how Generation Z accesses news, along with their overall attitudes and interactions with news content, it is vital that there is an element of understanding as to how post-millennial characteristics are formed. To establish the formation of 'Gen Z' characteristics, it is important to explore the impact the child development has on the acquisitions of attitudes and habits. This will be done through discussing developmental theories. The basis of this aids the formation of the theoretical framework discussed in Section 3.2. In addition to this, by exploring the various

developmental theories, this section also provides justification of the focus on the post-millennial demographic from a psychological theory perspective.

From a psychological theory perspective, given that Developmental Theories offer understanding of how children and young adults develop from both cognitive and social perspectives (Lerner, 2020). There are four theories of child development: Bowlby's Attachment Theory (2012)⁸; Erickson's stages of Psychosocial Development Theory (1980); Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory (1968) and Bandura's Social Learning Theory⁹ (1977). The four child developmental theories, although vary, do have unifying elements: identity is formed predominantly during the transition from childhood to adulthood. Therefore, this section will explain Erickson's Theory along with Piaget's to give a rationale as to why Generation Z has been appointed the focus of this thesis. Furthermore, the theories help provide further context as to why Bandura's SLT was selected for the theoretical framework of this study.

To begin with, Erickson's stages of Psychosocial Development (1980) will be discussed. Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory identifies eight stages that describe how people relate to the social world and is an expansion of Freud's (1977) five psychosexual stages whereby an erogenous zone must be satisfied at each of the stages to allow for the formation of a healthy personality; failure to satisfy may lead to a fixation in that area. Erikson (1980) identified eight stages of development or as he referred to them psychosocial crises: Hope – trust vs. mistrust; Will – autonomy vs. shame/doubt; Purpose – initiative vs. guilt; Competence – industry vs. inferiority; Fidelity – identity vs. role confusion; Love – intimacy

⁸ Bowlby's Attachment Theory (2012) emphasises the importance that children form an attachment to a specific person (usually a caregiver) which in turn allows for normal emotional and social development as well as working relationships in later life. Although it is identified that children model behaviour from a parent in relation to their media consumption (Edgerly *et al.*, 2018a) and that this parent may indeed be the inferred caregiver they have formed an attachment with, it is beyond the scope of this research to explore the degree of influence an attached caregiver may have on the formation of media habits compared to that of an unattached adult therefore Bowlby's Attachment Theory is not applicable for this research.

⁹ SLT is the theory which is utilised within the theoretical framework. It will be fully discussed separately to the other developmental theories due to its importance within the thesis.

vs. isolation; Care – generativity vs. stagnation; Wisdom – ego integrity vs. despair. Although all these stages of development pre-empt the formation of a person's character, the fourth stage: Fidelity is considered especially relevant to this thesis. It is the stage in which identity and affiliations are formed. Furthermore, the approximate age (13-19), means that at the time of writing this thesis, Generation Z were toward the end of this stage.

According to Erikson (1980), a person's identity is formed during adolescence (13-19 years of age) coining the term 'identity crisis' whereby a person generates a sense of self; marking the transition of childhood to adulthood. During this time, they will experiment with different aspects of life such as political leanings, religion, occupations, hobbies and an overall a sense of the kind of person they would wish to be in society. Therefore, this is extremely relevant to this thesis as at the time of writing post-millennials were arguably at a point in their lives where they had established their identities, affiliations and preferences which may be applied to how they elect to consume news.

Along with a person's identity forming at this age (13-19), so do certain habits which will often follow on into adulthood (Moore and Moschis, 1983). This is also evident through longitudinal data which demonstrates it is unlikely that these habits will change considerably throughout a lifetime (Antunovic *et al.*, 2018; Barnhurst and Wartella, 1991; Collins and Armstrong, 2008; Rodrigues, 2018). From a Generational Theory perspective, this accounts for certain generations displaying certain characteristics; although they may portray similar inherited traits from their parents/ previous generations (Edgerly *et al.*, 2018; Seemiller and Grace, 2019), they have also encountered cultural influences which have helped to inform their generational identity (Deal, 2007; Hoover, 2009; Lamb, 1991).

Nevertheless, some critics have argued that the stages allow for little crossover and that the phases are too rigid (Arnett, 2014). However, Erikson claimed that this was merely a guideline and that the phases although sequential, may be performed at alternative ages in general, these were the

ages within an individual's timeline when certain conflicts were most prominent (Erikson, 1956; McLeod, 2018) and the majority of identities tend to form during adolescence (Marcia, 1966). The tendency at this stage to become affiliated to groups, organisations or even people may easily be applied to media and subsequently media consumption such as identifying as a *Guardian* reader or affiliating themselves with journalists that they trust on social media (Gentilviso and Aikat, 2020; Lorenz, 2018).

Much akin to Erikson's stages of development, Piaget (1968) also identified set stages of development: sensorimotor; preoperational; concrete operational; formal operational. The final stage (formal operational stage) begins approximately at the age of 12 and it is at this stage when a person has more abstract thinking whereby, they are able to conduct hypothetical and deductive reasoning (Piaget, 2015). In terms of media consumption, it may be argued that it is during this stage that they will elect to adopt certain media based upon external variables which they then subconsciously evaluate such as prior knowledge (Bernacki *et al.*, 2020), ease of access from a socio-economic perspective (Rodríguez-Hernández *et al.*, 2020) or parental modelling (Vaala and Bleakley, 2015), both of which may be identified as defining variables in the theoretical framework.

3.4.1 Bandura's SLT and Parental Modelling

Researchers such as Edgerly *et al.* (2018a) explored the influence of parental modelling during formative years embracing Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory. Although Edgerly's research focused on teenage post-millennials given its time of publication, it does provide some foundation for this thesis as to why post-millennials may consume and engage with news the way they do (Addressing RQ1). This study analyses parental influence as an independent variable part of the theoretical framework. It investigates the impact it has on Generation Z's news consumption, engagement and trust.

Bandura's (1977) Social Learning is a hybrid of both cognitive and behavioural theories which aim to explain the process of learnt behaviours.

There are five principles of the concept: learning is not just behaviour it is a cognitive process functioning in a social context; learning requires observational modelling and decision making; vicarious reinforcement (observing the consequences of behaviour) can prompt learning; reciprocal determinism (cognitive, environmental and behavioural variables all influence one and other) infers the learner is not passive; reinforcement can aid learning but is not entirely responsible (Grusec, 1992).

Scholars such as Ferguson *et al.* (2020) and Kanz (2016) have criticised attempts to apply SLT to media consumption, particularly the concept that it can lead to audiences adopting violent behaviour due to media exposure. They claim that the media only has a slight influence upon behaviour after being mediated through and individual's normative belief. This is noted and for this thesis, Bandura's Social Learning Theory will not be applied in terms of the media influencing behaviour, but to explore how parental modelling (along with socio-economic status and educational level) influences media consumption via SLT; adopting the ethos of several scholars that parent or guardians model behaviours which are then adopted by their children (Del Vicario *et al.*, 2017; Edgerly *et al.*, 2018; Vaala and Bleakley, 2015; White *et al.*, 2000).

Nathanson (2015) applied SLT to his research and ascertained that parents are the ones who create a specific media environment for their children. Those with parents who actively engage with and promote news within the home are in turn more likely to actively engage with and promote news themselves having learnt the behaviours from their parents (Edgerly *et al.*, 2018a). Historically, the preference of some mediums over others by parents tend to be matched by their children. Banhurst and Wartell (1998, 1991) conducted two separate studies into the news consumption of American college students in the nineties (Generation Y) and found that parental engagement with newspaper and television news did influence the news consumption behaviours of their children again demonstrating SLT is applicable to news consumption habits. The findings of Banhurst and Wartell were also reflected in earlier studies (Atkin and Gantz, 1978; Chaffee *et al.*,

1971; Clarke, 1965; Cobb, 1986). More recently, research has been extended to digital mediums (Edgerly *et al.*, 2018a; Vaala and Bleakley, 2015).

Livingstone (2002) coined the phrase 'bedroom culture' to explain how media consumption had become a more private act due to the adoption of mobile devices; this gives rise to speculation that although children are influenced by their parents with regards to their news habits and values (Jennings *et al.*, 2009) the seclusion of consumption may result in a reduction of parental influence due to the decline of observational modelling. Nevertheless, SLT (Bandura, 2001) identifies that the transference of attitudes and habits is not only obtained through observational learning or modelling. It is also teamed with communication about norms or behaviour either verbally or by positive reinforcement such as rewards. This suggests that although children may not always visually observe their parents consuming news, conversations and attitudes within the home around news, will be observed and behaviours subsequently learnt.

SLT (Bandura, 1977) is a well-established framework in media and communication studies because it explains how individuals acquire behaviours, attitudes, and beliefs through observation, imitation, and reinforcement. In the context of Generation Z's media habits, this theory is particularly relevant as it accounts for the influence of both direct social interactions and mediated experiences, such as those encountered on social media platforms.

This theory is especially useful in addressing RQ4, as it provides insight into the social and environmental factors that shape Gen Z's news consumption, engagement, and trust. One key mechanism is parental modelling. Research shows that young people often adopt media behaviours observed in their parents or guardians, including the types of news sources they trust and the frequency with which they engage with news content (Edgerly *et al.*, 2018). This modelling effect is particularly strong in early adolescence and can

shape long-term attitudes toward media credibility and civic engagement (Murray *et al.*, 2020).

Socio-economic status (See section 3.7) also plays a critical role in shaping the social learning environment, hence why it is included as an independent variable within this theoretical framework. Families with higher socio-economic status often have greater access to digital technologies, educational resources, and media literacy, which can enhance the quality and diversity of news exposure (Roztocki *et al.*, 2019). Conversely, lower socio-economic status may limit access to reliable news sources and reinforce reliance on informal or peer-shared content, which may vary in credibility (Salaudeen and Onyechi, 2020). Social Learning Theory helps explain how these disparities in access and exposure contribute to differences in media trust and engagement across socio-economic groups.

Similarly, educational level (See section 3.7) influences the capacity for critical media consumption. Students in more academically enriched environments are more likely to be exposed to structured discussions about media, current events, and source evaluation (Thornberg *et al.*, 2022). These educational experiences serve as social learning opportunities that reinforce informed and discerning news behaviours. In contrast, limited educational exposure may reduce opportunities for guided media engagement, increasing susceptibility to misinformation or disengagement.

While peer influence and geographic location are often considered relevant in media studies, they may not be suitable for inclusion in this particular study. Peer influence, although significant in shaping social behaviours, is difficult to isolate and measure reliably in a quantitative framework. It often requires qualitative methods such as ethnographic observation or in-depth interviews to capture its nuanced effects (Livingstone and Sefton-Green, 2016). Moreover, Social Learning Theory emphasises the importance of observational learning from authoritative or credible models, such as parents or educators, rather than lateral peer interactions, which may be more variable and less structured.

Geographic location, meanwhile, has become less predictive of media habits in a digitally connected world. Generation Z frequently accesses news through global platforms that transcend local boundaries, making geographic distinctions less relevant (Couldry and Hepp, 2017). As such, the study may focus more effectively on digital environments and socio-cultural contexts rather than physical location, aligning with the theory's emphasis on mediated learning experiences.

By accounting for these socialising influences: parental behaviour, socio-economic context, and educational exposure, while excluding less theoretically aligned variables like peer and geographic influences, Social Learning Theory offers a robust framework for understanding the motivations and mechanisms behind Generation Z's news-related behaviours.

3.5 Actor Network Theory

Actor Network Theory (ANT) emerged in the 1980's and was developed by researchers Latour (1996) and Law (2007) in a bid to understand innovation and knowledge creation in science and digital technology. ANT considers both human and non-human actors, rejecting determinism, thereby rejecting the technological determinism of scholars such as McLuhan (McLuhan and Gordon, 2003). The theory focuses on relationships and networks, and it may be appropriately applied to understanding news consumption in contemporary contexts (Primo and Zago, 2015). As it explores news consumption as a network, viewing it not as an isolated individual activity but as part of a broader network by considering the actants involved: readers, journalists, news platforms, algorithms such as smartphones and social media. Furthermore, ANT is being increasingly applied by scholars studying digital journalism (Othman, 2019; Stalph, 2019) which is especially applicable to this research given the multi-media tendencies of Generation Z (Palfrey and Gasser, 2011; Prensky, 2010).

ANT is employed in media and communication studies to explore the dynamic relationships between human and non-human actors involved in the creation, dissemination, and reception of media content. Rather than privileging human agency, ANT treats all entities, such as journalists,

audiences, algorithms, platforms, and technologies, as actors within a network that collectively shape media practices and meanings. This approach allows researchers to trace how products are co-produced through interactions among diverse agents, both material and social (Shiga, 2006).

In particular, ANT's concept of "translation" is used to understand how claims, technologies, and practices are transformed and stabilised within media systems. For example, in digital journalism, ANT can reveal how editorial decisions, content algorithms, user interactions, and platform infrastructures work together to influence what becomes visible or trusted as news (Nimmo, 2011). This perspective challenges traditional sender-receiver models of communication by emphasising the distributed and negotiated nature of media production and consumption.

Traditional sender–receiver models, such as the Shannon–Weaver model (1949) and Berlo's SMCR model (1960), conceptualise communication as a linear process in which a sender transmits a message to a passive receiver through a defined channel. These models are foundational in communication theory and useful for understanding basic information flow. However, they are limited in their ability to account for the complexities of digital media environments, particularly those shaped by interactivity, algorithmic mediation, and user-generated content.

In contrast, ANT offers a more dynamic and relational framework that is better suited to understanding Generation Z's role within the news cycle. ANT treats both human and non-human entities (such as users, platforms, algorithms, and devices) as actors within a network that collectively shape communication processes (Shiga, 2006). This is particularly relevant for Generation Z, who are not merely passive recipients of news but active participants in its circulation, interpretation, and production.

ANT provides a valuable conceptual lens for addressing RQ1 by framing Generation Z's news consumption and engagement as outcomes of interactions within complex socio-technical networks. Rather than viewing

news audiences as passive recipients, ANT positions Generation Z as active participants whose behaviours are shaped by and help shape the digital environments they inhabit. This includes interactions with human actors (e.g., peers, influencers, journalists) and non-human actors (e.g., algorithms, platforms, mobile devices), all of which contribute to the circulation and credibility of news content (Latour, 2005; Wei, 2024). For instance, the visibility of news on platforms like TikTok or Instagram is not solely determined by editorial decisions but is co-constructed through algorithmic curation, user engagement, and platform affordances. Generation Z's practices, such as sharing, commenting, and remixing content, play a central role in this process, effectively positioning them as co-producers within the news cycle (Nawarathne and Storni, 2023). ANT thus enables a more nuanced understanding of how Gen Z navigates, influences, and is influenced by the digital news ecosystem, offering a dynamic framework for analysing their consumption and engagement patterns.

Ryfe (2022) argues ANT provides valuable tools for studying digital journalism in a time of fragmentation and change, while acknowledging some limitations that may need to be supplemented by other theories. The need for supplementing ANT with other theories is acknowledged and applied within the theoretical framework of this thesis. For the purpose of this study, the focus will be on the audience (specifically Generation Z) and their role within this network. Subsequently, ANT will inform the theoretical framework by explaining how post-millennials engage with the news. This in turn, will identify and justify key characteristics of 'Gen Z' from a Generational Theoretical perspective as discussed earlier in this chapter. As a result, the study is partaking in a more humanistic approach for its theoretical framework: focusing on the human actants in news production rather than that of the technological actors.

Due to advancements in digital networked technology and how it is used within the newsroom and at home, who or what is responsible for various stages of the news cycle process is now unclear (Tandoc and Vos, 2016). Therefore, Actor Network Theory is useful when exploring how post-

millennials are engaging with the news given that ANT considers the networked nature of digital technologies in the news production process. Traditionally the actants would all have clearly defined statuses in the news production process: sources, journalist and audience (Turner, 2005). However, these are becoming more indistinct with audiences having the capacity to reshape the content and distribution of news. Though post-millennials are more likely to trust user generated content (Francis and Hoefel, 2018a; Herrando *et al.*, 2019). However, amateur journalism can present legal and ethical issues with the potential spread of misinformation, libel and illegal content (Allcott *et al.*, 2019; Baker, 2021; Hanna, 2020; Quinn, 2018; Sallam *et al.*, 2020).

Latour (2005) indicated that ANT is more applicable when innovations rapidly develop; the rapid rise and fall of the entities involved and when lines between groups are unclear allow for more actants to come to light. Although this research focuses on a human centred¹⁰ perspective, the impact of digital technology cannot be ignored, and the influence of algorithmically generated and distributed news may also be considered an actor in news production. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is not new to the newsroom and has been used to produce data driven content for some time (Van den Bulck and Moe, 2018). The development of ChatGPT and its ability to form balanced and coherent texts (Adami, 2023; Hill-Yardin *et al.*, 2023) does signify that there is a strong contention that AI stands to be a prominent actor in the news cycle in future. However, this is an area for future study, and whilst worth noting, AI in journalism will not be explored further within this thesis.

3.5.1 Media and Participation

Given that it has been identified that networked technologies are providing scope for audiences to engage more with the news production and distribution process, it is imperative that the traditional gatekeeping role is reflected upon within this context. The term 'Gatekeeping' in journalism

¹⁰ Exploring the perspective of human actants rather than the technological actants within the network.

refers to the “overall process for which the social reality transmitted by the news media is constructed” (Shoemaker *et al.*, 2001, p. 233). Journalists are no longer the gatekeepers for news and no longer merely face the threat of digital technology and competitors in relation to the content released – audiences are evolving; engaging with and sometimes producing content (Bowman and Willis, 2003; Jenkins, 2008).

Bruns (2017b) coined the term ‘produsage’ to define the merging of producers and consumers. A clear example of this would be bloggers whom Burt (2019) referred to as ‘network entrepreneurs’ as they are placing themselves within a network be it political, marketing or social and reflecting that network’s concerns in the form of news articles. At the beginning of the 21st Century, bloggers were considered at times to compliment journalism or present challenges to the industry (Lowrey, 2006). They were also seen to encourage journalists to be more accurate and relevant by enforcing greater accountability (Singer, 2011; Turner, 2005; Wall, 2004). However, there is an understanding that bloggers and journalists alike are serving their own interests rather than society’s (Awtry, 2015; Delorme and Fedler, 2005; Singer, 2011). Nevertheless, this is not leading to a deeper level of distrust from audiences.

Digital networked technology has allowed for audiences to engage with news- they can comment, share and even contact news organisations with greater ease (Bradshaw, 2018). The line between journalist and audience is becoming blurred and can be explained through the concept of ANT as outlined in the preceding section. First, journalist are no longer the sole gatekeepers of the news (Boberg *et al.*, 2018), secondly, there is a commodity exchange between consumer and seller – in terms of media, this means that news organisations produce content for audiences which they wish to know, and which are trending (Chakraborty *et al.*, 2015). This can be observed through algorithms which rely upon audience engagement and interaction to grow (Fuchs, 2018). Younger audiences are now actively communicating with the news. Multiple studies have demonstrated that

Generation Z expect and want interactivity from the media they access (Southgate, 2017).

The idea of media which allows audience participation, although perceived as a relatively new concept, can in fact be traced back to the 18th Century. Initially, it was the fourth page of a publication which would be left blank for readers to add their own comments or news before passing it to friends or family (Wiles, 1965). This gave rise to criticism as it often led to the distribution of often erroneous information. Once the journalism industry became professionalised, newspapers no longer published with blank spaces for comments, effectively becoming gatekeepers creating a clear division between the journalism industry and audience (Boberg *et al.*, 2018; Gans, 2004; Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2011). That said, audiences were often given the impression of having some level of control in the form of letters to the editor which in turn were heavily vetted (Cavanagh and Steel, 2019; Singer, 2011). Online media is metaphorically re-vamping the 18th Century fourth page to a degree ensuring “news begins in their own hands” (Gentilviso and Aikat, 2020, p. 151). Audiences are influencing the news, which is generated, becoming collaborators in the gathering, selection, production and dissemination of news and proving to have multiple roles from an ANT perspective (Haigh *et al.*, 2018; Singer, 2011; Turner, 2005).

3.6 Diffusion of Innovation

The Diffusion of Innovations (DoI) Theory was popularised in the 1960s and describes how new ideas, behaviours, technologies or goods spread through a population (Rogers, 2003). For this research, the concept will aid the explanation of post-millennial adoption of digital technology when consuming and engaging with news; it will justify why specific technologies have spread throughout the ‘Gen Z’ demographic, while other may be rejected and not fully implemented. As Generation Z has adopted digital technology from a younger age and therefore are actants within the news cycle (ANT), it is important to understand why certain technologies are adopted and spread within society over other innovations, this may be done via DoI Theory. This understanding holds particular gravitas in today’s society as digital

technology is rapidly developing at a rate which is ultimately difficult to predict and at times comprehend (Hilmersson *et al.*, 2023).

Critics of the Diffusion of Innovation theory initially argued that it was not applicable to digital technology having originally been coined with agriculture in mind however, there are clear parallels when applying it to the adoption and utilisation of digital technology (Abu-Khadra and Ziadat, 2012).

Researchers Tornatzky and Klein (1982) have proven its relevance. Their study which included a meta-analysis of 75 articles along with a meta-analysis of empirical data identified that product/technology was applicable to the Diffusion of Innovation Theory identifying that three innovation characteristics were present (compatibility, relative advantage and complexity). Although Tornatzky and Klein acknowledged the limitations of their study which was predominantly a review of existing data and subsequently it was challenging to uncover empirical data of which was consistent in its approach, they were able to apply consistent variables (innovation characteristic = independent; adoption = dependent). Moreover, they did identify “the relationship between certain innovation characteristics and adoption-implementation shows some consistency in directionality” (Tornatzky and Klein, 1982, p. 39) clarifying its applicability to disciplines outside that of agriculture.

The theory was then consolidated by French sociologist Tarde who is accredited it with being “one of the basic explanations for social change” (Kinnunen, 1996, p. 3). Although Tarde’s theory was not just focused on digital technology, branching out to criminology, it all operated under the same premises: that there is a process of imitation and repetition. Much like Bandura’s (1977) Social Learning Theory (discussed earlier in this chapter), the use of digital technology had to be imitated and repeated for the behaviour to be adopted. This research aims to establish why post-millennials engage with news the way they do and the justification of the adoption of technologies.

As previously discussed in this chapter, when discussing child development and the acquisition of trust and habits, these 'habits' acquired by young people are often attributed to their environment for example, how their parents/ guardians engage with digital technology and subsequently with the news (Chaffee *et al.*, 1971; Radesky *et al.*, 2020; White *et al.*, 2000). Thus, the concept of the Diffusion of Innovation may be applied here with guardians being identified as adopters who are communicating the innovations to the next generation consequently enabling post-millennials to imitate and adopt these habits from an earlier age given the availability (Rogers, 2003). The convenience of digital technology to young people means that there is an ease of access making the overall decision to adopt the innovation simplified.

There are five stages to the adoption process:

1. Knowledge/awareness – where individuals become aware of the innovation and gain knowledge about its existence and potential benefits.
2. Persuasion – where people evaluate the innovation and decide whether it is worth adopting.
3. Decision – individuals make a conscious choice to adopt or reject the innovation, considering certain factors such as advantages, compatibility and social influence.
4. Implementation – adopters put the innovation into practice, learning how to use it effectively and integrate it into their routines.
5. Confirmation/ continuation – adopters assess the outcomes and if they find it beneficial, they will continue using it (Rogers, 2003).

During the decision-making process, the adopter (regardless of stage) will evaluate the advantages and disadvantages; one advantage of which is ease (Reinganum, 1989). The development of the Smartphone and its easy access to the internet means that it is often the first thing post-millennials will see in the morning and the last thing they see when going to bed; in addition, studies have found that it is predominantly how post-millennials are

accessing news (Flamingo, 2023; Kalogeropoulos *et al.*, 2019; Newman, 2009; Rodrigues, 2018; Twenge, 2017). These developments have also been attributed to the rise in popularity of social media, particularly YouTube, which has been considered one of the most popular mobile apps worldwide (Clement, 2019). A justification for YouTube's popularity is its algorithm which will automatically provide follow-on videos which are relevant to the viewers allowing for an element of 'binge-watching' (Nanda and Banerjee, 2020). It has already been identified that post-millennials, although actively engaging with the news, prefer for it to be presented to them with minimal effort (Flamingo, 2023; Kalogeropoulos, 2019; Twenge, 2017).

Although post-millennials are not passively and unquestioningly consuming media (Wood and Ebel, 2021). Some scholars who argue Generation Z have a lack of interest in what they consider news, have alluded to passivity due to the ease of which digital technology has allowed them to access news. Twenge (2017) attributed the post-millennial reliance on smart phones to what she observed as a lack of independence and social skills therefore implying the generation's passivity when consuming the news. Additionally, post-millennials are less likely to go directly to a news brand for information than previous generations; preferring instead to rely on weblinks from social media to which journalism is becoming more incorporated (Bruns, 2017; Djerf-Pierre *et al.*, 2019; Gentilviso and Aikat, 2020). Given social media's use of personalised algorithms, this may suggest a level of passivity in post-millennial news consumption (Kleemans *et al.*, 2018; Twenge, 2017).

However, as identified in Chapter 2, post-millennials are not passive consumers of the news and have demonstrated a desire for knowledge from early teens - preferring to engage with content which they consider representative of multiple and balanced views (Marchi, 2012). Regardless of the interpretation of passivity, the personalisation of social media adds a level of ease which again makes the adoption of the digital technology more likely. Furthermore, despite the view by some scholars that audiences are not actively seeking news, there is clear indication that these systems

(personalised algorithms) do allow audiences to maintain a level of knowledge of events around them (Hermida, 2010).

The theoretical framework for this research focuses on Generational Theory and the key concepts which have contributed to the characteristics of this generation's news consumption. As identified, post-millennials are actants in news production due to the participatory nature of social media and literature which has confirmed the engagement with the platform. The early adoption of technologies identified when discussing the Diffusion of Innovation would suggest that post-millennials' continued and developing use of this engagement relies upon several factors. As the five stages state, assessment is a key feature throughout the adoption and as identified within this section, ease of adoption is essential.

To adopt innovation, they must first be introduced to the innovation; this may be via peers or guardians and can arguably be linked to Bandura's (1977) SLT, whereby behaviour is modelled. Also, the expense of digital technology suggests that socio-economic status must be explored to identify if this impacts news consumption and engagement, further adding to the conceptual hierarchy of this thesis' theoretical framework. Adoption of digital technology is reliant on numerous factors. Of these, socio-economic status, education along with geographic location can all be dynamics which influence whether a person decides to embrace certain technologies to engage with the news (Aarts and Semetko, 2003; Althaus *et al.*, 2009; Baldwin *et al.*, 1992; Delli, 2004; Norris, 2000; Prior, 2007) and will be discussed in Section 3.7.

DOI is particularly valuable for analysing the uptake of new technologies and media formats, such as mobile news apps, social media platforms, and algorithm-driven content delivery. Its relevance to Generation Z lies in its ability to explain how this cohort evaluates and adopts emerging forms of news consumption.

The theory also considers the social system in which diffusion occurs, acknowledging that cultural norms, peer influence, and institutional trust all shape the adoption process (Rogers, 2003). This is particularly relevant in the context of the increasing reliance on peer-shared or influencer-endorsed news among younger audiences (Kalogeropoulos, 2019). DOI thus enables researchers to explore not only the technological aspects of news innovation but also the social and psychological factors that influence adoption and trust.

Diffusion of Innovation Theory offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the complex interplay of innovation characteristics, communication dynamics, and social context that underpin Generation Z's news behaviours. Its application to RQ4 allows for a nuanced exploration of the motivations behind how and why Gen Z consumes, engages with, and trusts news content.

3.7 Socio-economic status and Education

This section will discuss two of the independent variables (socio-economic status and education) of the theoretical framework and its conceptual hierarchy. It will also explain why they are applicable to the study. The other independent variable (Parental influence) was discussed during the exposition of SLT earlier in the chapter. All three variables aim to justify the attitudes and habit formation and link to ANT, SLT and the Diffusion of Innovation which inform the characteristics of Generation Z in terms of their news consumption, engagement and trust.

Although it has been established that a high proportion of the UK population has access to social media (Statista, 2023b), there are still some families, communities and individuals that are not in a position where they may afford to access digital technology and therefore may not be engaging with social media or digital technology as easily as those from more affluent backgrounds. This was made abundantly evident during the UK national lockdowns of 2020 and 2021 where students were unable to access some digital resources or attend live online lessons due to their economic situation

and lack of access to digital technology also known as 'digital poverty' (Bucuta, 2015; Office for Students, 2020; Packham, 2020). From a Diffusion of Innovation stance, this may account for decisions (consciously or subconsciously) not to adopt due to the lack of initial introduction because of social and economic circumstances (Rogers, 2003).

Historically, significant patterns have been found which link socio-economic status to news consumption and trust (Aarts and Semetko, 2003; Althaus *et al.*, 2009; Baldwin *et al.*, 1992; Delli, 2004; Norris, 2000, 2000; Prior, 2007). Eveland and Scheufele (2000) study surrounding the knowledge gap of heavy to light television and newspaper consumption Eveland and Scheufele (2000) found that those who did not access certain mediums had a more negative outlook to the platform. Given that the cost of digital technology may limit the access some people may have to certain platforms, there is the implication that those from a lower socio-economic background would place less trust in news which is distributed using digital platforms they may not have regular access to. Although the forementioned study focused on print and television, its conclusions are still relevant, therefore, this research addresses the assumption that those from a lower socio-economic background have less trust in news from less traditional platforms.

Nevertheless, the framework for this study aims to counteract the implication that socio-economic status is the single domineering factor of post-millennial news consumption by addressing other variables and comparing the influences to identify significance. Though, it must be noted that post-millennials may not have had immediate access to the digital technology at home, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) does play a role in the national curriculum with digital technology allowing access to the internet being available to children from primary age (DfE, 2019; Rodger, 2016) allowing them to adopt digital technology via another source. Although this may have been disrupted for future generations due to COVID-19 (Weidmann *et al.*, 2021), it may be presumed that internet habits of post-millennials will have been formed beforehand (McLeod, 2018).

Socio-economic status has been linked to education with a noticeable gap between those of higher and lower socio-economic status (Destin *et al.*, 2019; von Stumm, 2017). Schools have become more reliant upon digital technology, and it has been observed how the knowledge gap is also increasing (Office for Students, 2020; Weidmann *et al.*, 2021). As previously stated, those from a lower socio-economic background may not have the financial means to use digital technology. As well as educational institutions relying more so on digital technology, so do news outlets (Matsiola *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, it may be inferred that as multiple industries become reliant on digital technology to inform and educate, people who do not have the means to access this technology will be placed at a disadvantage.

3.7.1 Geographical Location

As well as educational context, environmental factors such as location may be considered a factor in consumption. Researchers have suggested that audiences will consume more news of which they feel is directly relevant to them (Harcup and O'Neill, 2017). As witnessed during the global pandemic, different regions experienced diverse restrictions or rate of infections and it was vital for organisations to stay abreast of developments across the country (BBC News, 2021a; Gathergood *et al.*, 2021; Murphy, 2020).

News consumption is a key influence in helping individuals achieve a social identity (Katz *et al.*, 1973). Geographic location is a strong variable for social identity with regions identifying as possessing several traits and attitudes (Harvie, 2016; Paasi, 2003; Simon *et al.*, 1995). These attitudes and traits are reinforced further by the rise of social media given the tendency for users to share news and information gathered from friends many of which are from the same locality and share the same values (Gentilviso and Aikat, 2020; Marchi and Clark, 2018). However, as Gulyas *et al.* (2019, p. 15) identified, “the geographical boundaries of local news were ambiguous and shifting” which arguable echoes search engines allowing for a diversity of voices for consumers to broaden their opinions and gain an insight further than their own locality (Flaxman *et al.*, 2016; Marchi and Clark, 2018; Mitchell *et al.*, 2014; Ofcom, 2020b). Furthermore, in 2011, Facebook

released data indicating there were now only four degrees of separation - this had reduced from six (Barnett, 2011). With only four degrees of separation (Backstrom *et al.*, 2012), friendship circles are now broadening and subsequently contributing to greater diversity of new consumption within regions which arguably reduces some of the contextual influences local identities may have on audiences.

As post-millennials have a wide knowledge of the internet and it being considered a vital part of their day-to-day functioning (Bucuta, 2015; Iqbal, 2018) it can be argued that they may not identify as strongly with regions. Given that Generation Z are metaphorically more geographically mobile due to digital technology, the relevance of local news may not be as appealing to this demographic. That said, it is acknowledged that Generation Z have demonstrated a preference to being informed by their counterparts and those that they feel represent them (Granger, 2022; Moore, 2019). However, there is still a distinct North-South divide in the UK which despite numerous 'Levelling-Up Bills' by government, has not been breached. Many regions in the north of England still feel mis-represented by the media (Jenkins, 2023; Simon *et al.*, 1995). This study will analyse the importance of relevance to post-millennials with the aim of establishing its impact on engagement. It will not address their preferences in terms of local, national or international news.

Subsequently, the variable of geographic location is not included within the theoretical framework. It is acknowledged that this is something that is beyond the scope of this study, but geographic location is something which will require further in future exploration. The requirement for further research into the impact of geographical location links to the theoretical framework of this study whereby it has been identified external variables have an impact on theoretical concepts. Geographic location may arguably be linked to these variables for example socio-economic status and educational levels of regions.

3.8 Theories Considered

Other theories were considered for this framework; however, they were deemed unsuitable for addressing the research questions. One theory explored was Uses and Gratification Theory (*Katz et al.*, 1973). Uses and Gratification Theory is a concept in media studies that explores how individuals actively seek out specific media to satisfy particular needs and desires. It is unlike other theories that focus on what media does to people such as Two-Step Flow Theory (Katz, 1957) and Reception Theory (Hall, 1973). Uses and Gratification Theory suggests that audiences are not passive consumers but rather active participants who choose media based on their personal goals, such as entertainment, information, personal identity, and social interaction. By understanding these motivations, researchers can better comprehend the diverse ways in which media fulfils the psychological and social needs of individuals.

Didi and LaRose (2006) explored how college students form news consumption habits using the Uses and Gratifications Theory. They found that habit strength is the most powerful predictor of news consumption overall. Furthermore, the scholars argued that the new media environment, with its myriad of choices, has created distinctive news consumption patterns amongst college students. The findings echo those discussed within the literature review of this thesis; that developing digital technology is having an impact on current news consumption. For this reason, it was imperative that theories used within the theoretical framework of this study embraced this ethos. Therefore, Actor Network Theory, along with the Diffusion of Innovation were selected. One of the key strengths of ANT is its ability to highlight the role of digital technology in shaping journalistic practices and audience behaviour. In the context of the news cycle, this means examining how digital platforms, algorithms, and other technological tools influence the way news is produced, distributed, and consumed. This approach helps to uncover the intricate relationships between journalists, audiences, and technological artefacts, providing a more nuanced understanding of the news ecosystem.

While Uses and Gratification Theory offers valuable insights into the motivations behind media consumption, Diffusion of Innovation Theory provides a more comprehensive framework for understanding the adoption and engagement process. It accounts for the social, technological, and individual factors that influence how new media technologies are integrated into daily life, making it a more appropriate tool for analysing news consumption and engagement in the rapidly evolving media landscape. Holman and Perreault (2023) effectively applied Diffusion of Innovation Theory to their research into how journalists adopted new technologies. The approach allowed the researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics of digital technology adoption in modern newsrooms and perceived support on this process. Although, the study focussed on professional journalists rather than the audience, as highlighted in Section 2.2.5, Generation Z have identified as digital natives who have been exposed to digital technology throughout their lives. Therefore, by applying the variables identified in the theoretical framework, it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of the support which may or may not aid the adoption process.

It is acknowledged that society and technology have each influenced each other. From a Social Shaping of Technology perspective (Williams and Edge, 1996), technology is adopted by audience, audience place demand on technology, technology develops further, which in turn is adopted again by the audience. Although this may be considered an appropriate approach to explore why post-millennials are engaging and consuming news in certain ways, the purpose of this study is not to establish how 'Gen Z' are changing the journalism industry. Subsequently, the decision was made to implement the Diffusion of Innovation Theory, coupled with Social Learning Theory to address RQ3 and RQ4.

Social Learning Theory (1977) has been successfully applied by scholars such as Edgerly et al. (2018a), who explored the impact of parental modelling on news consumption. Given the generational focus of this study, it would be an oversight not to consider parental influence, along with other

social influences on news consumption and trust. As identified by Strauss and Howe (1991a), generational characteristics are influenced by previous generations, as well as the context of which they are living at the time. Therefore, although theories such as Two Step Flow and Reception Theory seek to explain how audiences interpret the media, they do not offer an answer as to why they may interpret information in certain ways.

Reception Theory (Hall, 1973) provides a valuable lens for understanding the complex and dynamic relationship between media texts and their audiences, emphasising the diversity of interpretations and the active engagement of viewers, readers, and listeners. Nevertheless, several scholars such as Morley (2010) and Fiske (2011), have argued that Reception Theory tends to homogenise the audience, treating them as a uniform group and overlooking the diversity and complexity of individual audience members. Morley has emphasised the need to consider the varied social and cultural backgrounds of audiences, which can lead to different interpretations of media texts. This further justifies the inclusion of the independent variables in the theoretical framework of this study, also with the use of diffusion of Innovation.

Similar to Reception Theory, Two Step Flow (Lazerfeld et al., 1952) critics have argued that it over simplifies the process of media influence (Bennett and Iyengar, 2008; Lingstone, 1994). It assumes a linear and hierarchical flow of information from media to opinion leaders and then to the public, which does not account for the complex and multi-directional nature of modern news consumption discussed in the literature review. As previously discussed, in today's digital age, information flows through multiple channels simultaneously, and individuals can access news directly from various sources without relying on opinion leaders (Bull, 2015; Diehl et al., 2019; Hernández Guerrero, 2022).

3.9 Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter is to conceptually frame the thesis and explain the development of the conceptual theoretical hierarchy. It provides a

rationale of how the theoretical framework is to be used to address the research questions (Figure 3.1). The framework is a combination of theoretical concepts: Generational Theory; SLT; ANT and independent variables: Parental Modelling; Socio-economic Status; Education. Which in turn leads to the explaining how and why Generation Z consume, engage and trust news in specific ways.

As identified in Section 3.3, Generational Theory is the foundational theory for this study, stating that each generation has its own set of unique characteristics. When exploring the justification and reasoning for post-millennial news consumption, engagement and attitudes towards news, the concepts of ANT and Diffusion of Innovation are utilised.

ANT helps to explain the roles 'Gen Z' play in the production of news: they are the audience, but due to digital media allowing for greater participation, they may also be considered the producers and disseminators of news. The Diffusion of Innovation also explains why they may adopt certain media platforms and behaviours associated with the platforms over others. All these concepts are in-turn informed by SLT – the concept that people learn through modelling and repetition. As identified in Section 3.4.1 and Section 3.7, dependent on their parental influence, socio-economic status and education, individuals are exposed to differing behaviours, technologies and attitudes.

Finally, this original theoretical framework offers significant guidance for the journalism industry. It allows them to effectively inform and engage younger audiences by understanding how and why they consume and engage with news the way they do. By understanding the role post-millennials play in the news cycle process, along with their attitudes towards news, practitioners may develop more ways to gather and distribute accurate and reliable information efficiently.

Chapter 4 will now explore the methodology used to address the research questions of this thesis. Chapters 2 and 3 have provided a foundation for Chapter 4 and informed how the study will be designed.

Chapter 4

Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter gives a detailed description of the research methods utilised in addressing the research questions of the thesis:

- RQ1: How are Generation Z consuming and engaging with the news?
- RQ2: What are the levels of trust post-millennials have in the news that they are consuming?
- RQ3: Were the trust levels in news of post-millennials, along with their overall news consumption, impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- RQ4: What are the reasons behind Generation Z's news consumption, engagement and trust?

The chapter is arranged into three section which are as follows:

- 4.2 Preliminary Study – Focus Groups: This section identifies the approach used in the initial preliminary study which was conducted to inform the production of the survey. The preliminary allowed for a common lexicon to be established amongst 'Gen Z'. This was to allow for accurate communication and avoid ambiguity, ensuring the research questions were addressed effectively. The section also outlines the schedule for the focus groups explaining the questioning used as well as how the data was analysed. In addition to this, the focus groups provided some indication as to what the answers would be to RQ1, RQ2 and RQ4.
- 4.3 Survey: This section of the chapter discusses the survey methodology applied within the thesis. How sample size was decided along with the gathering of respondents is also explained. In addition, the section evaluates how the theoretical framework has been applied to structure the survey, along with the data obtained from the preliminary study and ethical considerations.

This research focusses on the post-millennial generation and aims to address the four research questions identified. This is to generate an insight into the field within which, there is a knowledge gap. In this case, it is identifying how Generation Z (as young adults) prefer to engage and consume news and why. To achieve this, a mixed-method approach combining both quantitative and qualitative methods was selected. The mixed methods are sequential (Creswell, 2013): A preliminary study (focus groups) was conducted to inform the construction of the quantitative research). Researchers have utilised focus groups to test pre-established ideas or concepts for their appropriateness in survey item. For example, Nassar-McMillan and Borders (2015) used preliminary focus groups to develop a survey of volunteer work behaviours. Furthermore, research centres such as PEW will regularly utilise focus groups alongside nationally representative surveys to inform survey design and enhance findings (Devlin, 2020).

Focus groups were utilised solely to ground the design of the survey. The thesis is comprised primarily of a quantitative study in the form of a survey, where the responses of 800 post-millennials regarding their news consumption habits and attitudes are analysed against three variables: parental influence, socio-economic status and educational level. Prior to this, the survey was developed through the previously mentioned preliminary study (focus groups) along with the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter 3. It is worth noting that the key method in this thesis is the survey. The following section (4.2) will discuss the significance of the preliminary study in shaping the survey.

4.2 Preliminary Study: Focus Groups

The design of the survey was partially based upon the findings from two focus groups. These focus groups were used to ensure the orientation of the survey resonated with its target group ('Gen Z'). It provided a test bed with which to explore terminology, language and cultural resonance. As Brace (2018) explained, before a survey may be distributed, it must be constructed and designed in a way that is relevant to its targeted respondents.

Generational Theory clearly identifies that each generation has its own traits and characteristics (Strauss and Howe, 2009) and this may be applied to language. Therefore, it was important to explore the common lexicon used amongst 'Gen Z' when referring to news. The focus groups were organised to explore preliminary framing of the survey, along with the language and news consumption habits of the target group. The approach taken while conducting the focus groups, along with the topics and areas covered are explained in Section 4.2.1.

As well as focus groups allowing the exploration of the appropriate discursive approach for creating a survey targeting post-millennials, it provided an initial insight into attitudes and preferred platforms, without participants feeling pressured into reaching a consensus (Kitzinger, 2005; Liamputtong, 2009). This approach enabled the researcher to explore the language and terminology used by participants, in order to ensure the survey resonated with their experiences and understanding (Adams, 2015). A probing style is conducted following open questioning (See Section 4.2.1 for details of questioning and analysis). As well as allowing the researcher to seek clarification and a clearer understanding if needed, it ensured the participants continued to discuss a statement rather than prompt them with potentially leading questions (Hennink, 2014; Stewart, 2014).

Two focus groups were conducted over a week-long period. The decision to have two focus groups rather than just one, was to identify if a common discourse was repeated between groups. They were face-to-face and were recorded with intention of being transcribed later (See A.1 and A.2 for transcripts). Participants were anonymised and this was communicated via informed consent, at the start of the focus group and during a debrief. Purposive sampling was used when selecting participants to ensure relevance to the research questions (Parker *et al.*, 2019). In this case, the defining characteristic was that they must be born between 1999 and 2002.

The first focus group (FG1) was made up of seven post-millennials (five male and two females) who were first year students at the University of

Derby. The second focus group (FG2) was conducted with six participants (five females and one male), also students from the University of Derby. Fine and Gordon (1989) urged fellow researchers to observe people together with those familiar to them to glean a true authenticity of what they are like, their views and concerns. Although Fine and Gordon are feminist researchers and subsequently their studies focus more on the close relationships women had with spouses, friends, parents, children and so forth, this concept can arguably be applied to this research: participants were familiar with each other; they had already built up a rapport which ensured the same level of comfort and therefore allowed greater flow of discussion (Conradson, 2005; Liamputtong, 2011; Morgan, 2007).

FG1 participants were selected from the School of Engineering and Technology. The participants of FG2 were students from the School of Arts, Humanities and Education. Both groups and participants were selected following an email request sent to academic staff at the university of Derby. Academics responded from the School of Engineering and the School of Arts, Humanities and Education. Timetables of potential participants were then explored to help identify which students would be available at the required time. They were then approached, briefed and asked if they would be willing to participate. Participants were informed of their right to decline if they wished to ensure ethical standards (Liamputtong, 2011; Pickering, 2008). Each focus group contained students from the same year group who were studying the same module together. Participants in each group were familiar with each other. By electing to use pre-existing groups, it was hoped that this would allow for a more open and relaxed discussion to take place given that the students knew each other already. (Conradson 2005; Liamputtong 2011; Morgan 1997). Additionally, given time constraints, the prior familiarity of the post-millennials led to a much quicker group dynamic developing (Leask *et al.*, 2001; Kitzinger 2005; Liamputtong 2011; Morgan 1993).

It is worth stating that the sample size was not intended to be fully representative of 'Gen Z' (Niles, 2006), but to provide an indicator of

common lexicon amongst post-millennials along with a consensus of attitudes towards news. Willis *et al.* (2009) identified at the beginning of the 21st Century, the perception of focus groups is that they are not an appropriate method for high-level research. However, Liamputtong (2011) later defended the approach, emphasising how focus groups are often used within health research as a popular option for identifying values and opinions due to being quick and cost-effective. Therefore, focus groups are an appropriate approach for the purpose they serve within this thesis. The high level-research element of this thesis is reserved for the survey of which the focus groups help provide a basis.

4.2.1 Focus Group Schedule

The transcripts for both focus groups may be found in Appendix (A.1 and A.2). As demonstrated by the transcripts, the focus groups were guided through a line of questioning which aimed to address five key themes. The five key themes were questions which the researcher had for the participants, but did not directly ask them. They were as follows:

1. How often do Generation Z engage/consume news?
2. How relevant is the news to them?
3. What do they believe constitutes as news?
4. What attitudes do they have to the news they are accessing?
5. Where do they feel they obtain the most news from?

As identified by Liamputtong (2011), it is important to build a rapport with participants. This was accomplished by giving a brief introduction as to the purpose of the focus group and requesting participants introduce themselves and provide some information. Subsequently, it ensured that all participants had spoken from the beginning and aided confidence. It was emphasised that participants should predominantly engage with each other rather than the researcher as the aim was to analyse their language (Kitzinger, 2005). However, it was also explained that the researcher may prompt for further clarification at times, as well as steer the conversation back to topic if it digresses.

A number of questions were then asked which served the purpose of addressing the five key themes; the primary focus being to identify the appropriate language to use within the survey in order for it to resonate with its target respondents. Themes 3 and 5 were used to form multiple choice questions within the survey by identifying popular media platforms as well as identifying genres of news from a 'Gen Z' perspective such as 'good news stories, sports stories, political stories. The remaining themes (1, 2 and 4) provided some indication of the levels of trust post-millennials had in the news they were accessing that reasoning for it, partially addressing RQ2 and RQ4.

The focus groups were recorded and later transcribed by the researcher for analysis. Each transcript was read multiple times, with the researcher identifying any common words used by participants when referring to the news such as "stories" or "posts". This was considered the best approach given the primary purpose of the focus groups (Conradson, 2005; Kitzinger, 2005; Liamputtong, 2009). The primary purpose of the focus groups was to explore the language used by participants to inform the development of the survey. The focus groups also allowed for an initial insight into the attitudes post-millennials had towards the news they were accessing. To establish this, axial coding was implemented. Common themes which may reflect attitudes to news were also noted. The themes were identified via a semiotic process, whereby the researcher interpreted words or phrases used to be positive, negative or neutral (Kitzinger, 2005). Although others such as Parker and Tritter (2006) suggest that attention should be paid to group dynamics, this was not considered necessary in this instance, as the intention was not to explore interactions. Furthermore Braun & Clarke (2006) and Liamputtong (2009) also argue that the semiotic process is the most appropriate for laying the foundations for a qualitative analysis.

Once a common lexicon was identified, the language was adopted within the survey. For example, when referring to news, the words 'stories' or 'information' were used instead. This was adopted within the survey. Furthermore, participants portrayed a distrust of the news they were

accessing; however it was not clear if this was due to platforms where they were accessing it. Therefore, questioning regarding levels of trust for each media platform was included within the survey. Finally, it was ensured that the platforms discussed within the focus groups were also incorporated throughout the survey, so it was relevant to the target respondents.

4.2.2 Focus Group Findings

The conversations between both groups displayed a strong mistrust of the news and news outlets (Figure 4.1). Specifically, they were aware of bias within the news media. Regular references to articles as 'points' or 'viewpoints' were made (Figure 4.2). This language was used when referring to newspapers presenting only one 'view-point' and exploring other articles online for other 'points'. In addition, 'opinion' and 'aspect' were also used, much in the same way as 'points' or 'viewpoints' again implying an awareness that outlets are not impartial.

'Post' and 'trending' featured in both groups although not as frequently. 'Post' could be considered as neutral as this is simply referring to what has appeared on the participants' newsfeed without them having engaged with it. 'Trending' is perceived as popular and something which is of interest to others, therefore having positive connotations.

The lexis 'stories' was used in most groups. As this word is usually used with regards to fiction and given the context of the discussion, implications are that some participants believed publications not to be wholly factual.

'Clickbait' and 'bait' were used in relation to some articles. 'Clickbait' is when a publication is given an enticing headline or image to tempt audiences into reading it (Bazaco *et al.*, 2019). As previously discussed, post-millennials demonstrate a mistrust of the news and use of this language is perceived to mean they believe news is being sensationalised to attract audiences. On the other hand, the word 'information' was the most popular word used. 'Information' means to inform and educate (Floridi, 2002) and therefore has positive connotations.

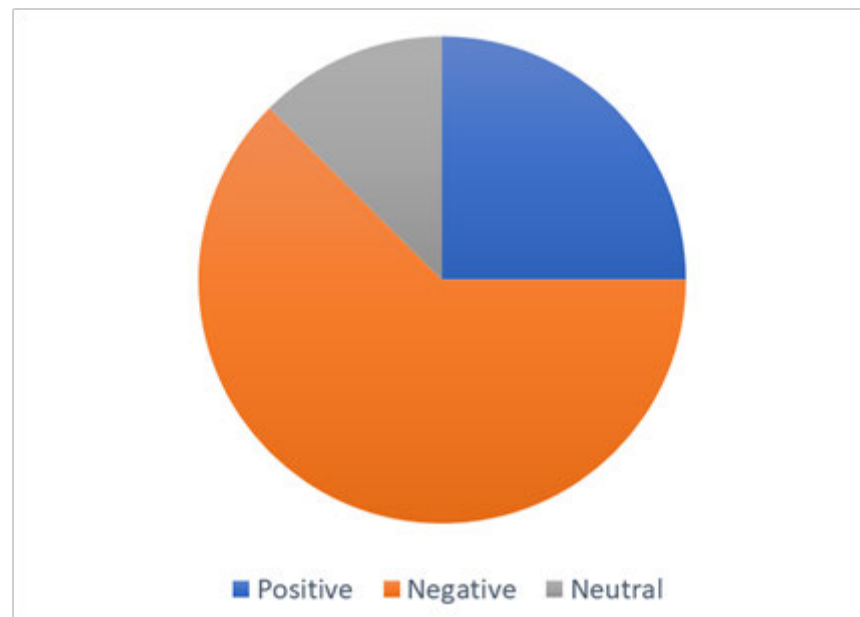


Figure 4.1: A perception of positive, negative and neutral language used by focus group participants

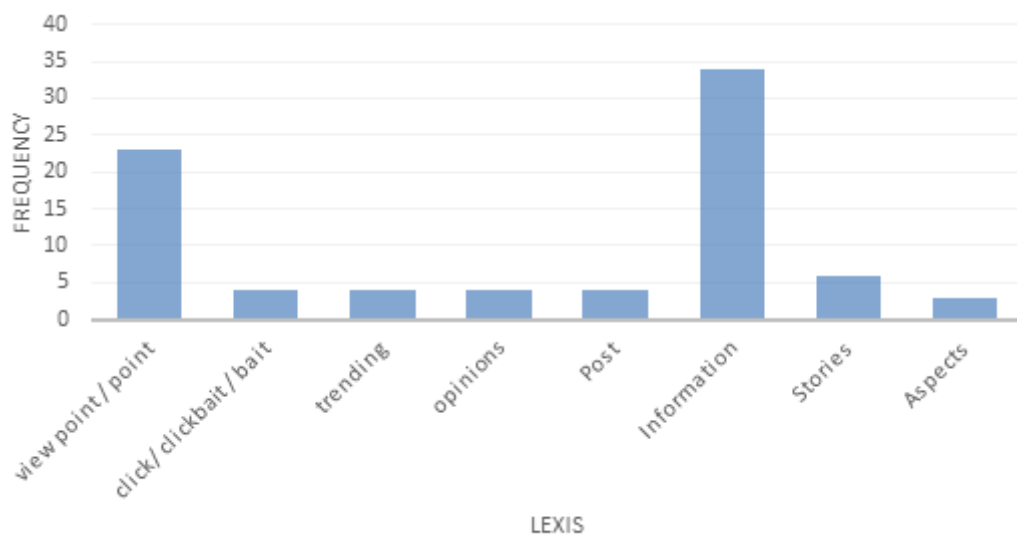


Figure 4.2: Frequency of lexis used during the focus groups

4.2.3 Focus Group: Summary

Overall, the aims of the focus groups were met. First, to ensure that a discourse which resonated with the target respondents ('Gen Z') was used. By doing this it was hoped that it would avoid any ambiguity of meaning. The

preliminary study has indicated that post-millennials consider the 'information' they access on social media to be news, therefore the lexis 'information' is used during the survey to define news. In addition to this, participants referred to 'stories' as news, again this is incorporated within the survey (See B.1). For example: Before lockdown, which type of *story* were you most interested in?

In addition to the primary aim of the preliminary study, the focus groups also served as an initial indicator as to the general disposition of Generation Z to the news and therefore addressing RQ2: What is the level of trust post-millennials have in the news they are accessing? The focus groups provided clear indications that from a generational perspective, post-millennials are suspicious of news content they access and will seek to authenticate via other means, usually by accessing other outlets (though it was not clear whether these included established news outlets). This reflects the theoretical concept that there are characteristics common to specific generations (Strauss and Howe, 2009). Furthermore, it emphasises that 'Gen Z' are a multi-media generation as previously stated, and this may be attributed to the diffusion of innovation and the ease in which they may adopt digital technology (Rogers, 2003). However, it is noted that the participants of the focus groups were educated to university level. They were also homogeneous groups which lacked diversity with regards to educational level. It is not clear if those educated to a different level may have differing attitudes, nor is it clear if socio-economic status may be a variable. Therefore, as per the theoretical framework (See Chapter 3), questions defining socio-economic status and education are embedded within the survey.

Finally, the focus groups also allowed for the identification of preferred platforms and digital technology for engaging with news. Post-millennials demonstrated clear preference for their smartphone when accessing news (See A.1; A.2). They also emphasised how inconvenient newspapers were, particularly when they were able to access content via their smartphones without having to go and physically purchase one. This was reflective of

other research which has shown a decline in print news popularity amongst younger generation (Chan-Olmsted et al., 2013; Chyi and Chadha, 2012; Ofcom, 2020). Additionally, it further supports the concept that post-millennials prefer ease, echoing the criteria for the adoption of digital technology in line with the concept of DoI (Edgerly *et al.*, 2018; Kalogeropoulos, 2019; Rodgers, 2003; Rodrigues, 2018) which identified Generation Z's reliance on digital technology and desire for minimal effort when accessing. Due to post-millennials displaying a preference for Smartphones, multiple ways of accessing the news digitally were addressed within the survey. This included: news apps, news organisation websites, social media, other websites (including blogs). Respondents were asked how often they accessed news via these platforms as well as to what extent they trusted the news they accessed from each platform.

4.3 The Survey

The survey for this study was disseminated online (Using online recruitment service Prolific) and completed within one day, by 800 respondents on August 5th 2020. As a result of the survey only taking 24 hours to obtain the 800 responses, this incidentally ensured that respondents arguably had access to the same news content available and enabled greater standardisation. Surveys provide a standardised procedure for generating data; a method which also allows for the researcher's questions to be articulated in a clear and concise way whilst still measuring the overall attitudes of respondents (Brace, 2018). For this part of the study, numerous variables such as education, socio-economic background and parental influence are measured to distinguish relationships between how news is consumed (with regards to the outlet) by post-millennials along with the generation's overall attitudes (in terms of their levels of trust) towards the content consumed. Consequently, this method addresses the four research questions.

This quantitative approach is considered as one best suited for the analysis of multi-variable data (Morgan, 1997). Empirical methodology has been criticised as a research method for cultural studies due to the need for

conceptualisation within the discipline itself (Pickering, 2008). However, as identified by Kozinets (2010), from an ethnography and netnography perspective, online surveys are believed to be an appropriate approach when exploring how certain cultures and groupings within society are behaving online and discerning patterns of behaviour in terms of the reasoning for the adoption and usage. 'Gen Z' are widely considered to be the generation which engages with online technology the most and from an ANT perspective are actors in online news production. Although surveys are undoubtedly empirical, the introduction of open questions does allow for context to be given despite the conceptions that coding of these open questions places restrictions on research (Bradburn *et al.*, 2015). Additionally, the survey prompts respondents to reflect on their own news consumption over time (before and after the first UK lockdown), their own views and to also give opinion on their news consumption growing up.

Anthropologist Geertz (1993) identified that there are issues in terms of distance for the respondents when reflecting on first and second hand experiences: the respondents of this survey are reflecting on past behaviour as well as present (at the time of writing) behaviour. Although, this may cause issues in terms of validity of data, it is interrogated through data analysis as well as from a theoretical perspective - for example: Kruskal-Wallis Testing is conducted to see if there is a difference in perceived parental trust in news and the respondents own perception of trust in news. This approach was taken by Wani and Nagaraj (2022), whose study surveyed 450 respondents from three groupings using Kruskal-Wallis Testing to analyse variations in sustainable tourism based on multiple variables.

Several Kruskal-Wallis Tests were conducted using a range of categorical groupings. This allowed for the identification of significance between groupings and the independent variables and addresses RQ2 and RQ4. The groupings for the Kruskal-Wallis were created using the framework from the survey as identified in Chapter 3: level of education; socio-economic background; parental influences. The Kruskal-Wallis Test reports if the p -

value < 0.05. If this was the case, then it suggested that there was something significant within the groupings related to the independent variables (Field, 2017; Humble, 2020; Pallant, 2020). Once significance was identified, a pairwise comparison was explored in more depth to identify if there were notable significant levels between certain groups; the groups and independent variables were then means tested to identify the median ranking. This then clarified what the significant differences are between the groups for example: those who have parents who consumed news often within the home when they were growing up are more likely to consume news more regularly themselves.

Although each respondent has their own experience in terms of their relationship with their parents, which could in turn influence their own perception, theoretical discussion around behaviour modelling and social learning permits a deeper understanding of the results by applying theory to practice and allowing for a level of general reasoning. The concept of general reasoning uses logical deduction, induction and abductive reasoning based on prior knowledge; it has been used by multiple cultural researchers in the past: Garnham (1990) and Schiller (1991) explored how advertising amongst other financial implications influenced cultural production. Politics, ownership and regulation have also been subjectively applied to resultant cultural production (Curran and Seaton, 2003; Herman and McChesney, 2001; Peacock, 1986). It is therefore not unjustified that general reasoning may be applied to the data gathered from the surveys to reach a deeper understanding as to why post-millennials are behaving in certain ways towards news.

4.3.1 Survey Sampling

According to generational theorists, there is a gap of fourteen to twenty years between generations (Strauss and Howe, 2009). Different studies have classified post-millennials as those being born from 1995 upwards and some research is yet to give a cut-off for the generation (Priporas *et al.*, 2017a). It is not uncommon for those to be born at the beginning of their era or the end, to display traits of the previous or proceeding generations

otherwise known as ‘cuspers’ (Seemiller and Grace, 2019). In some cases, micro-generations are established in the larger generational groups such as ‘Xennials’ which are representative of the ‘cuspers’ of older millennials which may demonstrate characteristics of ‘Generation X’ (Merriam-Webster, 2018). To avoid ambiguity, the decision was made for this thesis to focus on an age group which would fall within the middle: 1999-2002. The choice to cut-off those born after the year 2002 was made the need to avoid additional obstacles such as parental consent.

As of 2020, there were approximately 6 million 18–20-year-olds (Statista, 2018b). A confidence level for the survey must be sought and the minimum advised by researchers is 95 percent (Niles, 2006). A 95 percent confidence level means that if the survey were to be conducted 100 times, it would be expected that the true population parameter would fall within the confidence interval 95 times (Krosnick, 2018; Niles, 2006). The confidence interval is a range of values, derived from the sample data, that is likely to contain the true population parameter. It is calculated using the sample mean, the standard error, and the critical value associated with the chosen confidence level (Spiegelhalter, 2019).

To achieve a 95 percent confidence level for a population of 6 million, a sample size of 600 is recommended by several reputable online sample calculators (Creative Research Systems, 2003; Qualtrics, 2019; Science Buddies, 2006; Survey Monkey, 2020) to give an adequate representation of UK post-millennials. Although the sample size could have been calculated by the researcher, there are many formulas such as Cochran’s (Statistics How To, 2020) or Slovan’s (Ellen, 2018), this is both time consuming and unnecessary due to the online resources available.

4.3.1.1 COVID-19 and Alterations to Survey Design

During the global pandemic, there were clear indications that habits were changing in terms of media consumption due to the national lockdown (Bu *et al.*, 2022). The original framework of the survey did not take these changes into account and therefore had to be revised – respondents were asked to

consider their perception of news engagement prior to and after the first national UK lockdown which lasted from March 2020 to June 2020 (Baker *et al.*, 2023). Reflections may at times be problematic if the respondent overthinks their answers and feels that they should answer a question in a certain way rather than reflect their own individual experiences and views (Geertz, 1993; Prior, 2009). To avoid this, clear instructions were given to not dwell on the question and give an initial response to avoid the respondent potentially self-sabotaging their own answers, this was further enforced with a time limit to complete the survey (Brace, 2018; Bradburn *et al.*, 2015).

As well as affecting the gathering of data, lockdown also impacted the timeline of the write-up of this thesis due to changes in personal circumstances which were not previously accounted for when initially planning research. The study design included the recruitment of 600 respondents to be collected using an online participant recruitment service called Prolific (Prolific, 2020). This was to further ensure a representative sample of the post-millennial generation. However, the decision was made to increase this number to 800 to allow for a greater margin of incorrectly completed forms.

4.3.1.2 Prolific, Recruitment and Data Collection

Online studies which use recruitment services are becoming more common, especially in psychological research (Eerola *et al.*, 2021). For the purpose of this survey, Prolific was selected as the recruiter for several reasons: Prolific recruits respondents and verifies their identity through a detailed registration process. Furthermore, attention checks, quality control checks and fraud detection systems are also in place to ensure that respondents are providing accurate responses (Prolific, 2020). In addition to this, respondents are required to maintain a high compliance rate to remain eligible to studies.

Prolific uses quota sampling to recruit respondents (Kothe and Ling, 2019). The non-probability sampling technique represents key traits of the wider population, and the respondents are not randomly selected; instead they are

recruited to fulfil predefined quotas that mirror the population's proportions (Futri *et al.*, 2022). In this case, it was to gather enough respondents within a specific age bracket to offer a 95 percent confidence level.

There are several advantages to using online recruiters such as the speed of data collection along with the range or target demographic (Wardropper *et al.*, 2021) however, there are some counter arguments such as the lack of a controlled environment for the surveys to be completed (Eerola *et al.*, 2021). For example, respondents for this survey were able to respond on their phones, tablets or desktops meaning there was the possibility of outside influences. Nevertheless, Prolific allowed for time-limits to be set to avoid distractions (respondents were given ten minutes). A fee of £6 per/hour was also offered as an incentive, this was recommended as the minimum amount on the Prolific recruitment website at the time of the study (Prolific, 2020). Renumeration for the time given by participants can be observed in multiple studies and is considered common practice within research (Head, 2009; Moss *et al.*, 2023; Pickering, 2008). As previously mentioned, online recruiters such as Prolific also ensure steps are taken so that the system is not abused subsequently jeopardising academic integrity.

The surveys were self-completed using Google Forms (a link which was provided via Prolific). This allowed for respondents to remain anonymous which is beneficial when questioning may be potentially sensitive (Basi, 1999; Ilieva *et al.*, 2002; Kellner, 2004; Krosnick, 2018; Taylor, 2000). Additionally, the self-completed forms combat any potential bias inadvertently caused by an interviewer in addition to allowing respondents to be honest about potentially sensitive subjects with greater ease (Bradburn *et al.*, 2015; Krosnick, 2018). Nevertheless, there was the possibility of other issues arising such as misunderstanding of questions as the interviewer is not there to clarify (Brace, 2018). To overcome this obstacle, a test sample was conducted with approximately 20 respondents to ensure any possible ambiguity is identified (Brace, 2018) and avoided for the proceeding survey.

The online approach had the additional benefit as there have been some criticism that allowing respondents access to all questions at once (as would be the case with a paper-based print-out) could impact the overall response especially when requiring a spontaneous response (Brace, 2018).

Nevertheless, this is considered more of an issue for marketing questions for example: getting an initial response to new branding. Though this survey included attitudinal questions, the need for impulsive reactions was not required as this is an analysis ongoing attitudes and values.

A self-completion form does allow respondents time to consider their answers, however, there is some dispute that it is not the most suitable methodology for gauging attitudes with researchers sometimes favouring a more qualitative approach such as structured interviews (Krosnick, 2018; Mills and Birks, 2014). The favouring of structured interviews is generally due to the many respondents feeling they have attitudes/ beliefs regarding topics, it is not something they have thought about in depth and therefore struggle to address in survey form.

Nonetheless, as this survey is anonymous, this encourages greater honesty for sensitive issues and richer answers for any open-ended questions as well as allowing a larger sample from a greater geographical area (Basi, 1999; Ilieva *et al.*, 2002; Kellner, 2004; Krosnick, 2018; Taylor, 2000). Although, surveys allow respondents more time to digest the information and consider their answers, attitudinal studies have shown that findings were more accurate when respondents were given less time to respond (Tourangeau *et al.*, 2000) thus attitudinal dialogue in this survey included instructions to respondents to give their first response and to not ponder on each statement.

In addition to the instructional notes added to the survey, it was also vital that the questioning followed a sequence ensuring a logical development between questions thus avoiding any confusion or lack of engagement from the respondent (Brace, 2018; Oppenheim, 2005). Questions were a mixture of closed questions, pre-coded closed questions which require single pre-

coded responses and open questions for clarification with answers coded post-circulation. For the purpose of measuring attitudes towards news, the Likert scale has been selected due to its ease to be adapted to an online format and user-friendly characteristics (Salkind, 2010).

The survey was designed to take no longer than 10 minutes to complete, as the more time and effort required from respondents could have led to a decline in response rate (Lavrakas, 2008; Rattray and Jones, 2007). The data collected from the survey was systematically coded – this included both closed questioning and the identifying of common themes (Krosnick, 2018).

4.3.2 Survey Design

As discussed in Chapter 3, a conceptual theoretical framework has been developed for this thesis. It was therefore imperative that the survey included the key variables within the framework to inform the survey design.

Questions were produced utilising the Likert Scales (Joshi *et al.*, 2015), whereby respondents would rank their parental/guardian news engagement/platform choice and levels of trust when growing up. This would then be compared with their own personal rankings of the same questions. Questions about their family's socio-economic background with educational were also included allowing comparisons of groupings. The survey also made more generic enquiries about their preferred platforms, trust in platforms, frequency of engagement to further establish possible influences of groupings.

To ensure that the survey addressed the research questions, it was split into five sections. The sections followed a logical sequency which gradually required greater reflection by the respondents as they became more relaxed and familiar with the questioning (Brace, 2018; Gillham, 2007; Lavrakas, 2008). The purpose of each section was explained to respondents to maintain informed consent. The sections were produced as follows:

- Section 1 of the survey established the socio-economic status of the respondents, along with their level of education. This was in reflection

of the variables identified within the theoretical framework and allowed for RQ4 to be addressed.

- Section 2 asked respondents to reflect on their news consumption and engagement prior to the first UK lockdown. They were also asked about their levels of trust for each media platform before the first UK lockdown. This address RQ1 and RQ2.
- Section 3 of the survey enquired about respondents' news consumption, engagement and levels of trust after the first UK lockdown. This was relevant at the time the survey was distributed as this directly followed the first UK lockdown. This addressed RQ3.
- Section 4 enquired about news consumption throughout their lives. It asked about news exposure within their homes when growing up. It also requested that respondents reflect on their parent/guardian's news consumption, engagement and trust. This was to further address RQ4 and also allowed for exploration into the variable of parental modelling on news consumption as outlined within the theoretical framework. In addition to this, respondents were asked to reflect on their news consumption, engagement and trust, if they felt this had changed following the first UK lockdown addressing RQ3.

Most questions throughout the survey were multiple choice questions. This allowed the researcher to pre-code the answers into a codebook prior to the data gathering (Brace, 2018). Nevertheless, open questions were included when respondents were asked for preferred organisations or reasons for levels of trust or change of attitudes. In this instance, the answers were coded once the data had been gathered and common themes identified. For example: reasons for a decline in trust following the first UK lockdown – bias, misinformation, fake news. Once the data was coded and categorised as nominal, ordinal or scale allowing for it to be inputted to SPSS (Field, 2017; Humble, 2020; Pallant, 2020).

4.3.3 Survey Data Analysis

As previously stated, a codebook was produced, and the data set manually entered into SPSS due to the incompatibility of google forms and SPSS for

exporting the data. A summary of frequencies was initially conducted to address the specific research questions: How are Generation Z consuming and engaging with the news? What are the levels of trust post-millennials have in the news they are consuming? What are the reasons behind Generation Z's consumption, engagement and trust? Were the trust levels of news of post-millennials, along with their overall news consumption impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic. This was then followed by further tests to analyse which variables may or may not be significant.

The survey was distributed using an online recruitment service Prolific. Due to its use of quota sampling, it was not possible to get a 'normal distribution' of Generation Z respondents in terms of their socio-economic status, education and parental views. As a result, the sample was skewed, and a parametric test being conducted was not possible (Pallant, 2020).

Subsequently, a non-parametric test was chosen: the Kruskal-Wallis test. The Kruskal-Wallis Test examines multiple independent groups and does not presume a 'normal' distribution (Kruskal and Wallis, 1952). While critics of non-parametric test claim that these are not as robust as the parametric, as they make no distributional assumptions (Field, 2017), this is not so; they simply do not presume a 'normal' distribution and are suitable for the purpose of this research, which did not have a 'normal' distribution.

4.4 Ethical Considerations

This research involved members of the public (Focus Groups and Survey), which signifies that careful consideration and application is required in order that the research does not harm or disadvantage participants (Drolet *et al.*, 2023). Therefore, ethical approval is required to ensure that the stages of the research process adhere to the strict guidelines in relation to the protection of participants and the integrity of the research itself (London, 2022). This research was engaging with young people at a historically challenging time: following the first UK lockdown. the mental wellbeing of the participants was imperative. Therefore, it was essential that the questioning would not be potentially triggering to the target respondents and that they were fully informed throughout the process of completing the survey.

Full ethical approval was sought through the University of Derby's Ethic's Knowledge Exchange and Research Panel and approval granted. Evidence of this (application and approval) is provided in the Appendix (B.2). The following sections will detail the steps taken to ensure that this research was conducted in compliance with the University of Derby's ethics guidelines as will be details in the next sections.

4.4.1 Focus Groups

Participants were provided with an informed consent form (Which is included within the application and can be seen in B.2 of the Appendix) prior to the study which they were required to sign. Informed consent is a key principle of research ethics that ensures participants can make an informed decision about whether or not to take part in the research (Bos, 2020; Miller *et al.*, 2012; Woodfield, 2018). The form explained the purpose of the study along with contact details for the University of Derby's Knowledge Exchange and Research Office which administers research ethics and integrity throughout the institution. The form also made participants aware that they may withdraw from the study at any point up until submission of the thesis. Audio recordings were made of the focus group sessions, this was for transcription purposes only and destroyed when no longer required according to the University of Derby's regulations and requirements. Participants were identified as F1, M1 depending on gender and number to protect identity. Participants were provided with a full written brief explaining how the data would be stored on an encrypted file and destroyed when no longer required as per the Data Protection Act. The right to withdraw was also reiterated within the debrief.

4.4.2 Survey

Respondents were offered an incentive of £6 per hour as remuneration for their participation within the survey. Funding was obtained following a bid to University of Derby's Arts, Humanities and Education Research Fund. Respondents were able to remain anonymous and were required to provide a four-digit identification number (month of birth and last two digits of mobile number recommended) to allow them to withdraw from the study should they

wish to and still remain anonymous. Informed consent was provided at the start of the survey, with details of its purpose along with contact details for the University of Derby's Knowledge Exchange and Research Office. Respondents were informed of their right to withdraw from the study up until the submission of the thesis. Any personal information was stored on encrypted files with access only given to the researcher and Director of Study. Data was deleted when no longer required (following thesis publication).

4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has given an overview of the approaches selected for this study. The precise research methods and how they have been utilised have been detailed in depth. Each part of the study addresses at least one of the following research questions:

- RQ1: How are Generation Z consuming and engaging with the news?
- RQ2: What are the levels of trust post-millennials have in the news that they are consuming?
- RQ3: Were the trust levels in news of post-millennials, along with their overall news consumption, impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- RQ4: What are the reasons behind Generation Z's news consumption, engagement and trust?

As discussed in Chapter 4.2 a preliminary study in the form of a focus group was also conducted to help inform the production of the survey with regards to language use, as well as provide an initial guide on post-millennial news engagement and overall attitudes.

The findings of the focus groups were combined with the conceptual theoretical framework discussed in Chapter 3. This aided the structure of the survey to ensure that the variables (Parental influence, socio-economic status and educational level) were addressed within the survey to allow for later analysis of the data and further discussion of the theoretical concepts (ANT, SLT, Diffusion of Innovation and Generational Theory).

This chapter has provided an overview of the methodology used for this study and the reasoning behind it. Chapter 5 will now provide the results of the survey addressing RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3 before moving onto Chapter 6 which addresses RQ4.

Chapter 5

General Patterns of Generation Z's News Engagement and Trust

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a comprehensive analysis of the data collected from a survey of 800 post-millennials. It is structured into four main sections, Sections 5.2 – 5.4 each address one of the research questions (RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3). While Section 5.5 provides a discussion of the results. The first three research questions fundamentally underpin RQ4, which provides further context and nuance behind the reasoning for the trust and engagement identified within this chapter. Subsequently, RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3 are referred to as the first stage results/findings and RQ4 is referenced as the second stage results/findings. This highlights the sequential nature of the data gathering, analysis and discussion.

Section 5.2 focuses on RQ1, examining the media platforms Generation Z preferred for news consumption before the first UK lockdown. It also explores the frequency of their news consumption and, from an Actor-Network Theory (ANT) perspective, the role these platforms play within the news cycle. Section 5.3 addresses RQ2, investigating the levels of trust post-millennials had in the news they consumed before the first UK lockdown and whether this trust varied across different platforms. Section 5.4 delves into RQ3, providing insights into the impact of COVID-19 on news engagement and trust. This section uses descriptive statistics and cross-references previous academic research to offer a detailed analysis. Section 5.5 concludes with a discussion of the findings, synthesising the results from the previous sections.

By examining their news consumption habits and trust levels, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, this study offers significant contemporary findings that enhance understanding of post-millennials' interaction with news media. The insights gained from this research are

valuable for media scholars and media organisations, as they highlight the unique characteristics and preferences of Generation Z.

This chapter aims to provide a nuanced understanding of Generation Z's news consumption habits, their trust in various news platforms, and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on their engagement with news. By embedding the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter 3, this analysis offers valuable insights into the evolving landscape of news consumption among post-millennials.

5.2 Research Question 1: How are Generation Z consuming and engaging with the news?

The theoretical framework identified in Chapter 3, highlights that each generation displays characteristics which will be unique to them (Strauss and Howe, 1991). Generational Theory can be operationalised in the data analysis of a survey by using it as a framework to categorise and interpret the behaviours and attitudes of Generation Z, typically defined as those born between 1997 and 2012. For RQ1, this involves identifying Generation Z respondents in the dataset and analysing their news consumption habits, such as preferred platforms, formats, and frequency, through the lens of generational traits like digital nativity and a preference for visual, fast-paced content.

To address RQ1, Actor Network Theory is utilised to understand the different roles post-millennials may play within the news cycle process. By focusing on Generation Z not merely as consumers of news, but as active participants and co-constructors within the broader news production cycle. ANT encourages the examination of networks composed of both human and non-human actors, such as individuals, platforms, algorithms, and devices, each exerting influence within the system. In this framework, Generation Z are seen as agents who shape the flow, visibility, and even the content of news through their interactions, preferences, and digital behaviours.

This perspective is particularly valuable when analysing the survey data, as it allows the researcher to trace how Generation Z engage with news beyond passive reading or viewing. For instance, their roles in sharing or commenting on news-related content on social media platforms, can be mapped as forms of participation that influence what becomes newsworthy or gains traction. ANT enables the identification of these interactions as meaningful contributions to the news cycle, highlighting how Generation Z help to amplify, challenge, or reframe narratives.

By treating Generation Z as embedded within a dynamic network of influence, ANT provides a nuanced lens through which to interpret survey findings. It shifts the focus from isolated behaviours to relational processes, offering richer insights into how this generation navigates, contributes to, and reshapes the contemporary news landscape.

The following section of Chapter 5 will identify where post-millennials prefer to access their news, in addition to their preferred formats and news organisations. Furthermore, it will discuss how 'Gen Z' are engaging with the news.

5.2.1 Platforms, news organisations and format (Consumption)

Respondents were asked to reflect on their news consumption habits prior to the first UK lockdown. Although this may be considered not to be wholly accurate as it is subjective to the respondent, it is accurate in terms of the respondent's own personal perception and experience.

Prior to the first UK lockdown, only 5 percent of 'Gen Z' felt that they never consumed news and 39.13 percent stated that they accessed news daily (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1: Percentage of Respondents Consuming News Before the First UK Lockdown

Frequency of News Accessed Before COVID-19	
More than once a day	14.20%
Daily	39.10%
Weekly	30.10%
Monthly	11.50%
Never	5%

In terms of where they were accessing the news, social media proved to be the most common preference with only 6 percent stating that they never accessed news through this medium (Figure 5.1). In addition, the preferred social media platforms for news were specified as follows: Twitter, Instagram and Facebook.

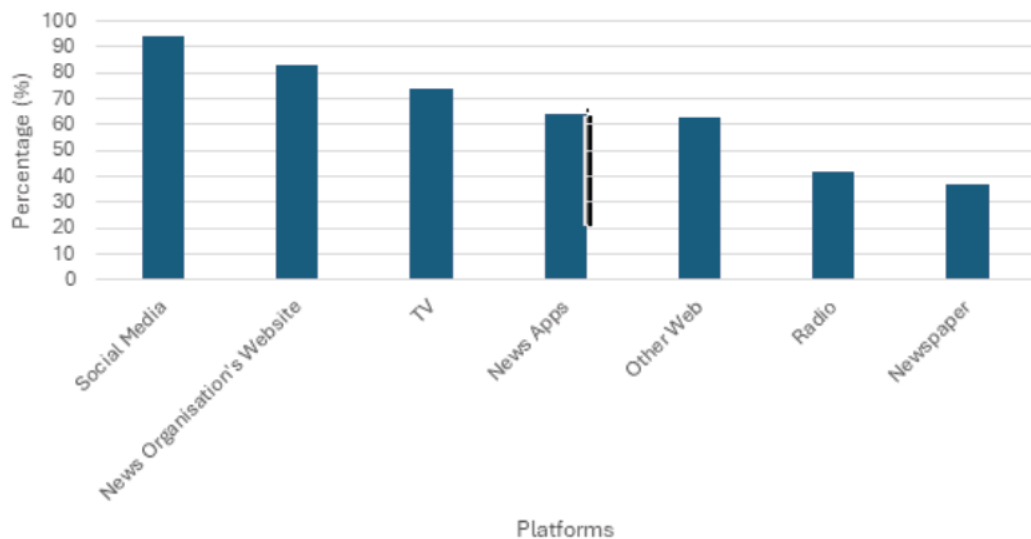


Figure 5.1: An Illustration of Generation Z's Platform Preference for Accessing News

A news organisation's website was the next popular platform with only 17 percent of respondents claiming never to access news through this route. *BBC*, *The Guardian* and *The Independent* (Figure 5.2) were identified as the most popular websites for accessing news. The organisational preferences were surprising, as they do not predominantly cater for younger audiences. Nevertheless, these are established news brands which have been in the public domain for decades.

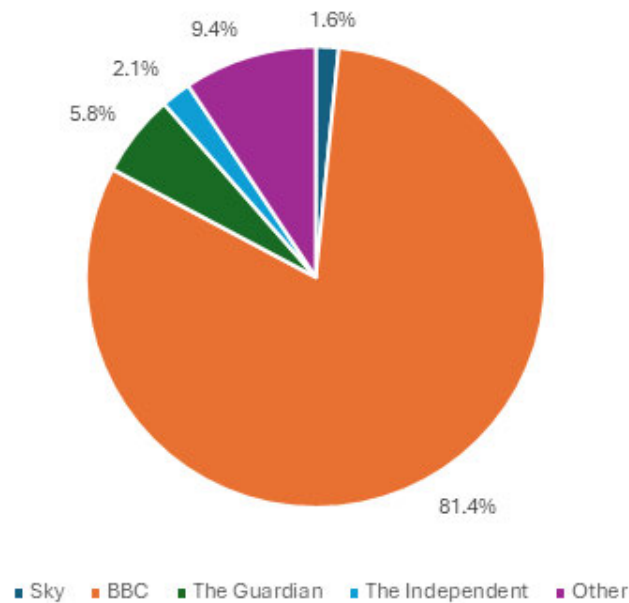


Figure 5.2: Illustration of 'Gen Z' Preferred News Organisation Websites (%)

Though news organisations' websites were rated as the second most popular source for news prior to lockdown, this may arguably be higher: when asked how they would access the sites, 32.5 percent admitted to doing so via social media as opposed to going directly to the site (Figure 5.3). This suggests that although they found the news on social media, they went directly to the source to consume it.

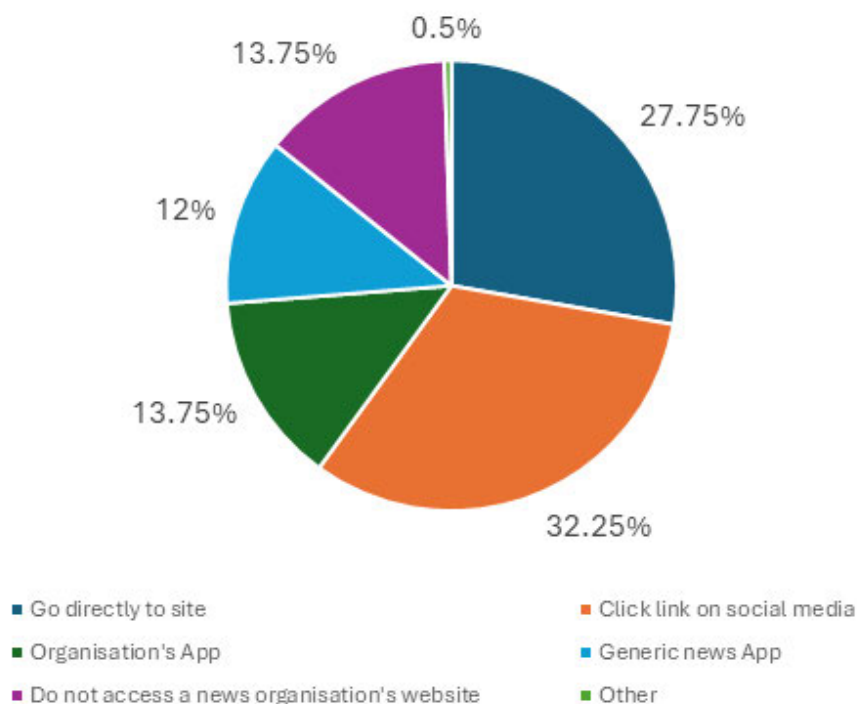


Figure 5.3: Illustration of 'Gen Z' Popular Access Routes to News Organisations' Websites

TV news was rated third most popular with 74 percent stating that they did use the platform to access news (Figure 5.1). Furthermore, the BBC, Sky and ITV were named as the preferred broadcasters (Figure 5.4).

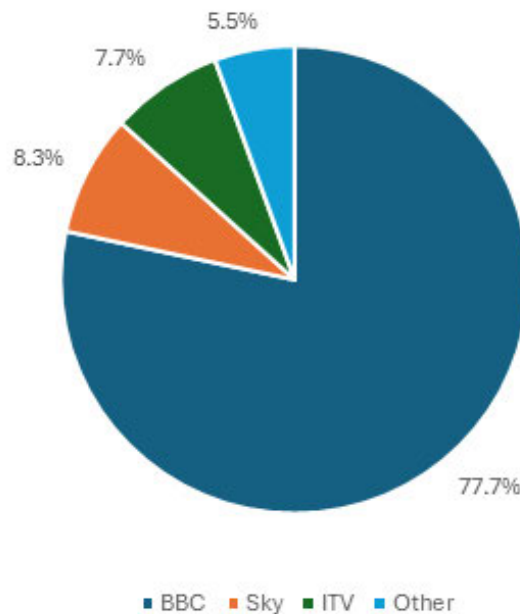


Figure 5.4: Illustration of 'Gen Z' Preferred TV News Organisation

In descending order (Figure 5.1), the following platforms were ranked as follows for accessing news: News Apps (64 percent); other websites (62.5 percent); radio (42 percent); newspapers (37 percent). Interestingly, the BBC was again selected as the most popular organisation when respondents were asked to identify their preferred App for accessing the news, followed by Apple and Google (Figure 5.5). This arguably demonstrates the BBC's ability to engage with audiences across platforms.

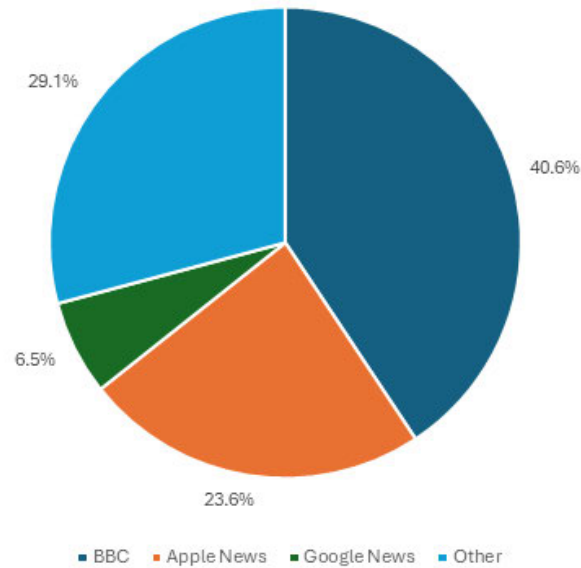


Figure 5.5: Illustration of 'Gen Z' Preferred News App

5.2.2 Types of News, Consumption and Engagement (ANT shares)

Respondents were asked to specify what type of news they most liked to consume. For this question, the option to select more than one genre was given, so as not to limit their answers (Figure 5.6). The most popular genre was entertainment at 48.7 percent, this was then followed by stories that they felt were specifically relevant to them (44.6 percent), good news stories (36 percent) and political (34 percent).

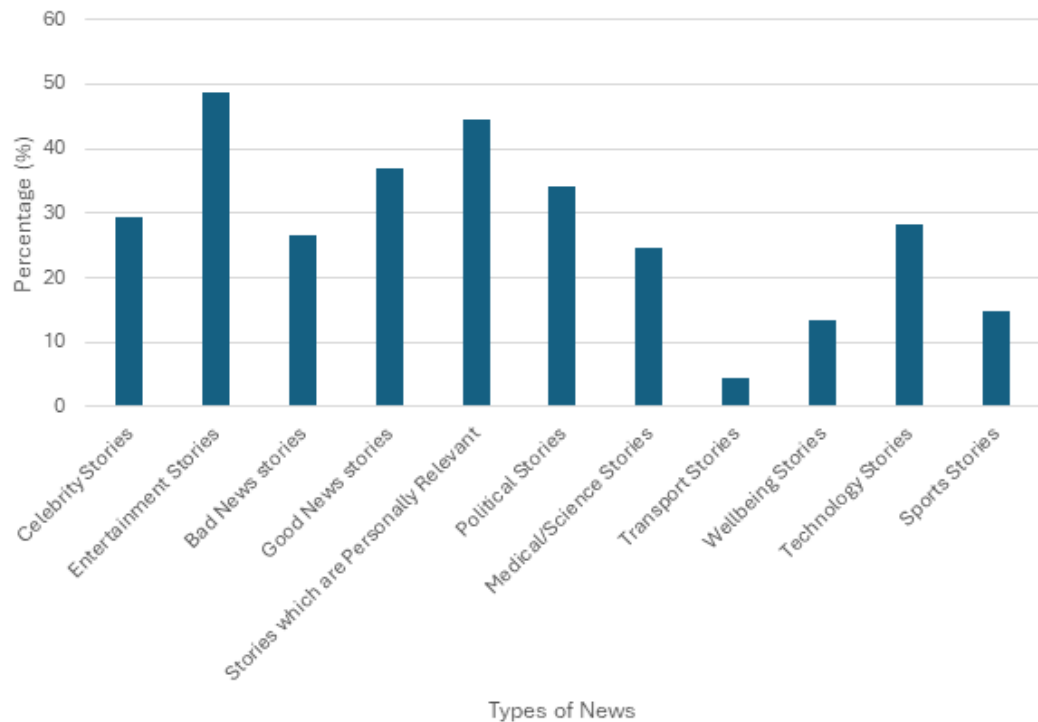


Figure 5.6: A Graph Illustrating the Types of News Post-Millennials Prefer

Over 70 percent of post-millennials said that they did share content online (Figure 5.7). Substantially, the most popular content to share was memes (40.3 percent) followed by good news stories (26 percent) and political stories. Despite entertainment news being ranked as the most popular genre to consume, only 19 percent said that they would share this genre of news. Stories which 'Gen Z' felt were relevant to them were shared slightly less than political stories (24.2 percent), with less than one percent between the two, demonstrating an interest in the community and society matters.

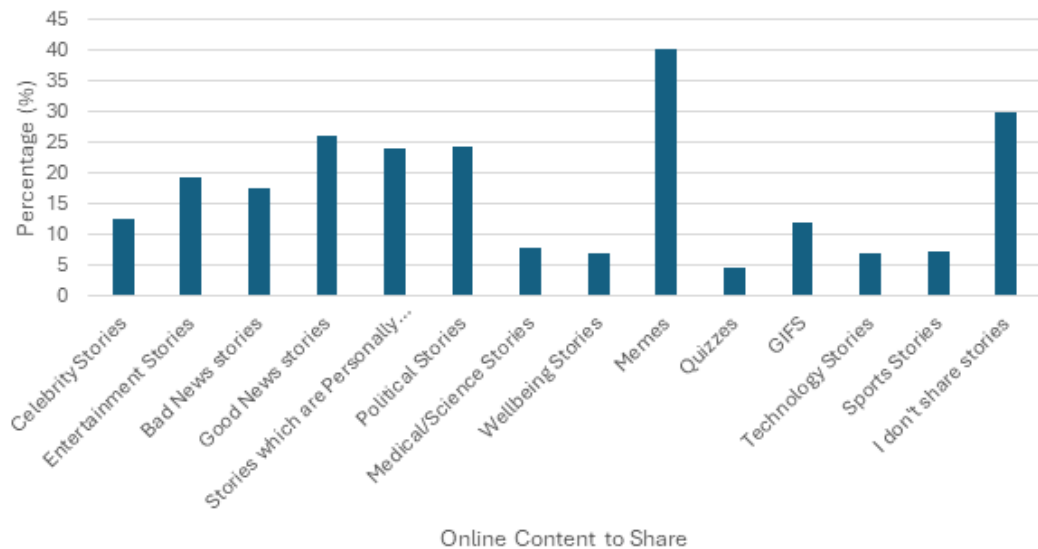


Figure 5.7: Illustration of the Online Content post-Millennial Reported to Share

Although over 70 percent of post-millennials claim to share content online, only 56.7 percent felt that they commented on the content they accessed. This suggests that although Generation Z are actants¹¹ in the production of news from an ANT concept, it indicates that they are more likely to be disseminators of the news rather than contribute news content.

Respondents were asked how regularly they commented on news content. Responses ranged from 'once a month' to 'monthly' (Figure 5.8). Those stating that they commented 'daily' and 'more than once a day' was considerably less than more infrequent interactions (monthly/weekly). While the frequency of shares was not measured, there is clear indication that 'Gen Z' prefer to engage with content by sharing as only 29.8 percent reported to not sharing content at all. This contrasts with the 43.3 percent which reported to never comment on news stories.

¹¹ Actant: a person, creature, or object playing any of a set of active roles in a narrative/production (Latour, 1996)

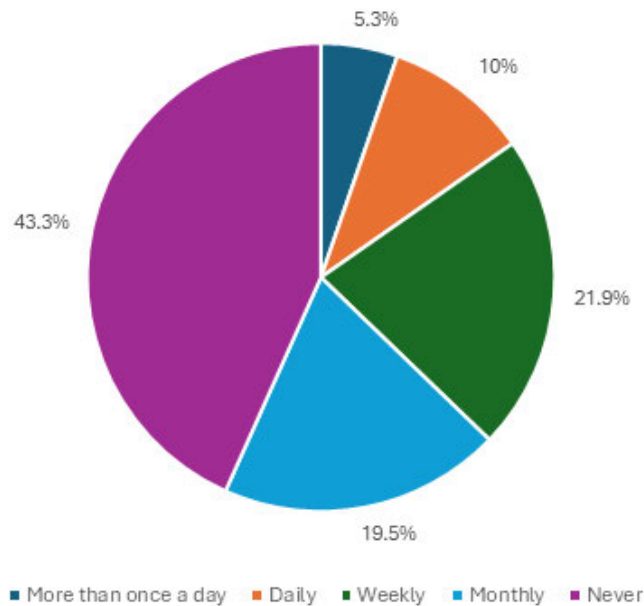


Figure 5.8: An illustration of how often Generation Z feel they comment on news stories

5.3 Research Question 2: What are the levels of trust post-millennials have in the news that they are consuming?

Generation Z's trust in news, may be attributed to several variables, but the ones which are the focus of the theoretical framework are socio-economic status, educational level and parental influence. These variables will be discussed in more detail when addressing Research Question 4 in Chapter 6. This section of Chapter 5 again applies the concept that Generation Z have certain characteristics – in this case, it is in relation to the level of trust they have in news they consume. For RQ2, trust in news is examined as a generationally influenced construct (applying the concepts of Generational Theory), shaped by exposure to misinformation and declining institutional trust. This is measured using a Likert-scale items and analysed in relation to different news platforms and sources to understand which align with Generation Z's values, such as authenticity and transparency.

The following section identifies the overall level of trust post-millennials had in news prior to the first UK lockdown. Respondents were presented with a Likert Scale ranging from 'extremely trusting' to 'extremely not trusting'. As well as gauging the overall trust in news prior to the first lockdown, the following section also clarifies the level of trust post-millennials have in the news accessed via certain platforms. This provides an indication of 'Gen Z's

attitudes towards news, when they are not experiencing a national crisis¹². Although it may be argued that the COVID-19 pandemic may have permanently altered Generation Z's attitudes towards news, it is not within the scope of this study to predict. It would require further research to establish this. However, by identifying levels of trust before the global pandemic, it is possible ascertain a baseline which will serve a comparison for future studies.

5.3.1 Platform Trust

Respondents were asked which platforms they felt provided the most accurate news (Figure 5.9). For this question, they were able to select more than one option to reflect the multi-media tendencies of modern audiences (Bull, 2015; Diehl *et al.*, 2019). The top three platforms were a news organisation's website (54 percent), TV news (34 percent) and Twitter (28 percent). Although TV news is still ranked the second most popular for providing accurate content, other more traditional outlets such as radio and newspapers were not as positively perceived with only 9 percent considering radio to be accurate and only 11.9 percent believing newspapers to be reliable.

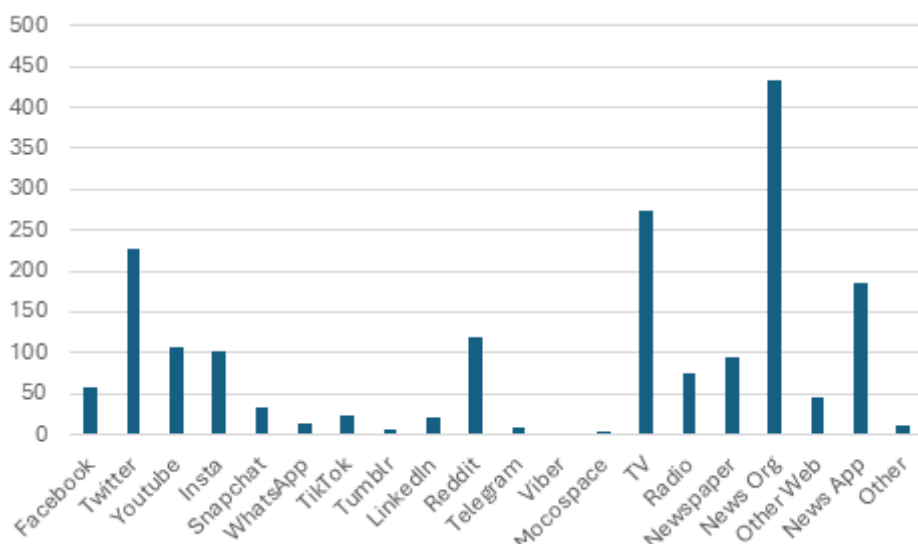


Figure 5.9: Post-millennial perception of which outlets provide accurate news content

¹² Section 5.5 will address how levels of trust may have altered during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Once respondents specified how often they accessed a certain platform for news, they were then asked what level of trust they had of the content they consumed via this platform. Again, a Likert rating scale was used: extremely trusting; trusting; neutral; not trusting; extremely not trusting. It must be noted, that despite some respondents stating that they never accessed certain platforms for news, some still felt able to give some indication of their levels of trust in the outlets prior to the first UK lockdown. For example, 208 claimed never to access news via television, however 74 of these respondents opted to provide an opinion on the platform as opposed to stating they did not access news through this platform (which was a multiple-choice option available to them). Although this is a relatively small percentage, to avoid ambiguity only the trust perceptions of those who stated a minimal engagement of once a month with a platform were measured. This was to identify if users of certain platforms displayed higher levels of trust than others.

Despite social media being ranked as the most popular place for accessing news before the first UK lockdown (Figure 5.1), 29.9 percent of those retrieving news from this platform stated that they did not trust the content. Similarly, 28.7 percent of 'Gen Z' who accessed news from a newspaper (Figure 5.10) did not trust the information they were consuming. Although these results signify that there is no correlation between trust and engagement with a media platform, the indiscretion in sample size means that further investigation would be needed to clarify this: 749 post-millennials consuming news through social media as opposed to 198 accessing via newspapers.

However, this pattern is observed again when comparing those who used news organisations' websites and radio to access news. Of those accessing news via news organisations' websites, 9.9 percent stated that they did not trust the news they consumed from this platform and 8.9 percent of those accessing news from radio felt that they did not trust the information they were consuming. Again, the sample sizes varied largely with almost double the number of post-millennials using news organisations' websites to access

news in comparison to those using radio. Nevertheless, the figures suggest once again that trust is not imperative to engagement.

Although social media and a news organisations' website were ranked as the most popular in terms of accessing news, the trust levels were much higher for the news organisations' websites than social media (despite the difference between the number of respondents using the news to access it being relatively small). Again, supporting the notion that engagement with a platform is not linked to trust. Furthermore, the overall sample size for this study exceeds the required amount for a 95 percent confidence level (as outlined in the methodology chapter of this study), adding further support that the results would be supported in future studies.

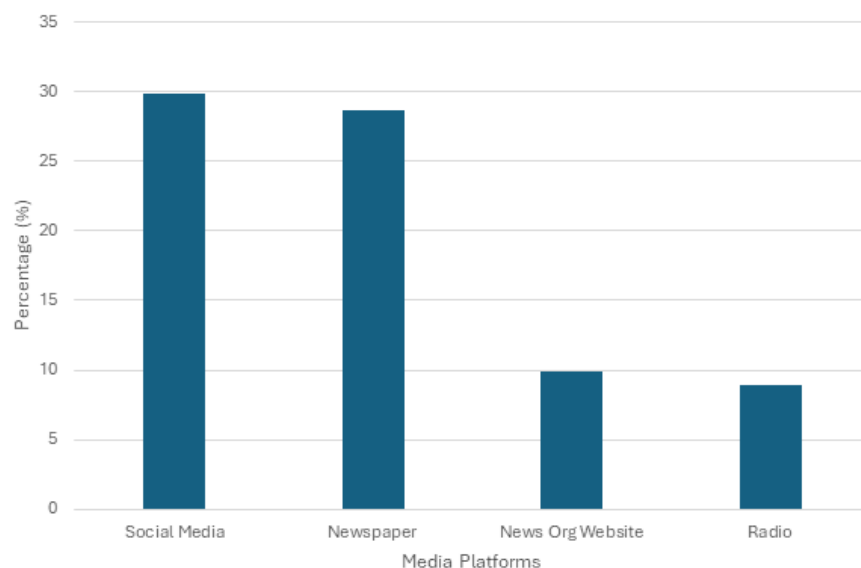


Figure 5.10: An Illustration of 'Gen Z' stating that they do not trust the news content accessed via specified media platforms

5.4 Research Question 3: Was there an Impact on Engagement and Trust in News during COVID-19?

Due to the timing of the circulation of the survey, there was a valid assumption that a national lockdown would impact how news was accessed overall (Arens, 2020; De Valck, 2020; Goodyear, 2020; Orso *et al.*, 2020). Subsequently, the decision was made to ask respondents to reflect on their previous news consumption and trust in news (prior to the first UK national lockdown in March 2020), as well as their news consumption and trust in

news at the time the survey was distributed (August 2020). By exploring the differences between consumption before and after the first UK lockdown, the researcher was able to identify how eras of crisis (such as a global pandemic), impact the ways in which news is consumed and engaged with by Generation Z and draw comparisons. For RQ3, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on both trust and consumption can be explored by comparing pre- and post-pandemic data within the Generation Z cohort. This includes examining shifts in behaviour and trust and interpreting them in the context of the pandemic as a formative generational experience. Open questions, which are later coded, further enrich the analysis by revealing how these young people emotionally and behaviourally responded to news during a time of global crisis. In all cases, Generational Theory provides a structured way to interpret patterns and changes in news engagement and trust through the unique social and technological context that shapes Generation Z.

The line of questioning also allowed for a comparison of attitudes towards the news that post-millennials were consuming. Respondents were asked if they had more or less trust in news content. They were then asked an open question as to why their levels of trust may have changed. The answers were then coded according to commonality.

5.4.1 Social media use before the global pandemic vs Social media use after the first UK lockdown

Due to social media being one of the most popular platforms for accessing news amongst post-millennials (as identified in Section 5.2), respondents were asked to reflect on the social media platforms they engaged with before the first UK lockdown (March 2020) and after the first UK lockdown (August 2020). As previously discussed, social medias may be incidentally exposed to news content via their news feed and therefore may be engaging in more news than they perceive.

Before the first UK lockdown, the social media outlets which post-millennials perceived that they used the most were Snapchat (25.3 percent), Instagram

(21.8 percent) and YouTube (20.8 percent). These were clearly the top three platforms, with the fourth most used platform being Twitter and ten percent lower than third most used at 10.1 percent. All top three outlets are predominantly image dominated (both audio visual and still) demonstrating strong preference towards this format. On the other hand, Tik Tok, which is also audio visual, rated below Reddit (7.5 percent), a social media news platform which encourages interaction, at 5.5 percent. This may in part be due to Tik Tok's relative newness having been launched in 2016 (Iqbal, 2020) as opposed to Reddit which was launched more than a decade prior (Richards, 2016). Facebook, which is used by many news organisations to engage with audiences (Bell, 2016; Kalogeropoulos and Newman, 2017), was rated as seventh most used at 5 percent.

Following the first UK lockdown of 2020, preferences did shift although the same outlets remained in the top seven. The top three most used platforms were Instagram (18.9 percent), YouTube (17.9 percent) and Tik Tok (17.9 percent). Twitter's perceived usage also rose by more than 5 percent at 15.5 percent, but it remained fourth most used and Snapchat (once considered most popular), had decreased significantly (9.1 percent) falling from first most used to fifth. The number of post-millennials perceiving to use Facebook the most remained relatively consistent at 4.9 percent and remaining the seventh most used outlet. One issue of note is that the range between first and seventh had decreased slightly and the intervals between the top five outlets had decreased following the first lockdown demonstrating a more even spread in terms of preference (see Figure 5.11).

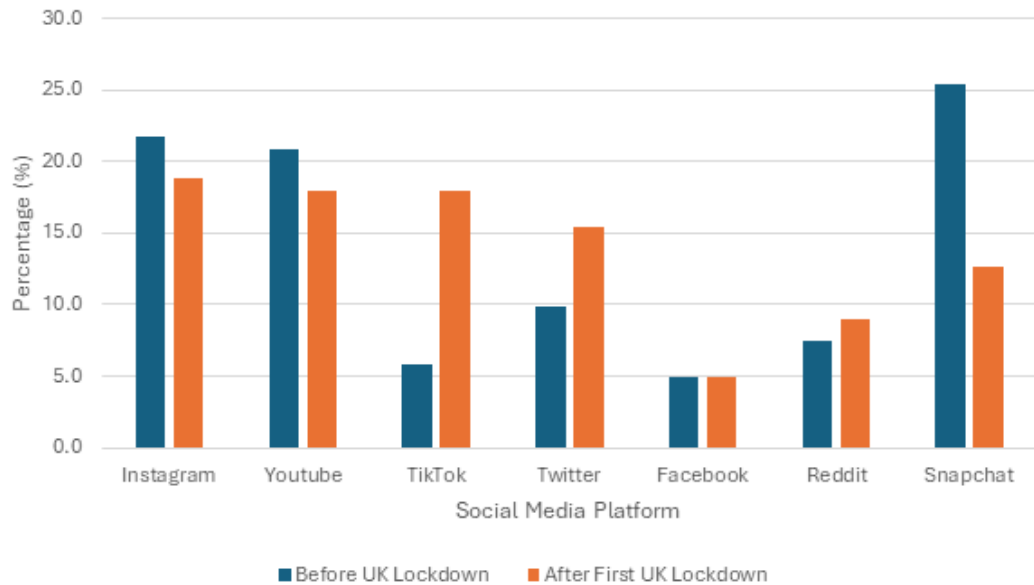


Figure 5.11: An Illustration of 'Gen Z' most used social media platforms social media platform used before and after the first UK lockdown

Given the volume of social media available, attention was given only to the top four outlets: Instagram, YouTube, TikTok and Twitter. On this occasion the four most popular were explored as opposed to only the top three due to a relatively large increase in Twitter's popularity. Furthermore, as will be examined in Chapter 3.1.1.2, the preference of post-millennials to use Twitter to gather accurate information infers that expanding beyond the top three is particularly relevant to this study. In terms of justification for engaging with the top four outlets, varied information/content was listed in the top three reasons for accessing each platform (Figure 5.12). In addition to this, post-millennials expressed a desire to be entertained with TikTok being the most popular social media platform identified for this purpose followed by YouTube. In terms of keeping in touch, respondents stated that that was their main reason for using Instagram along with its varied information/content.

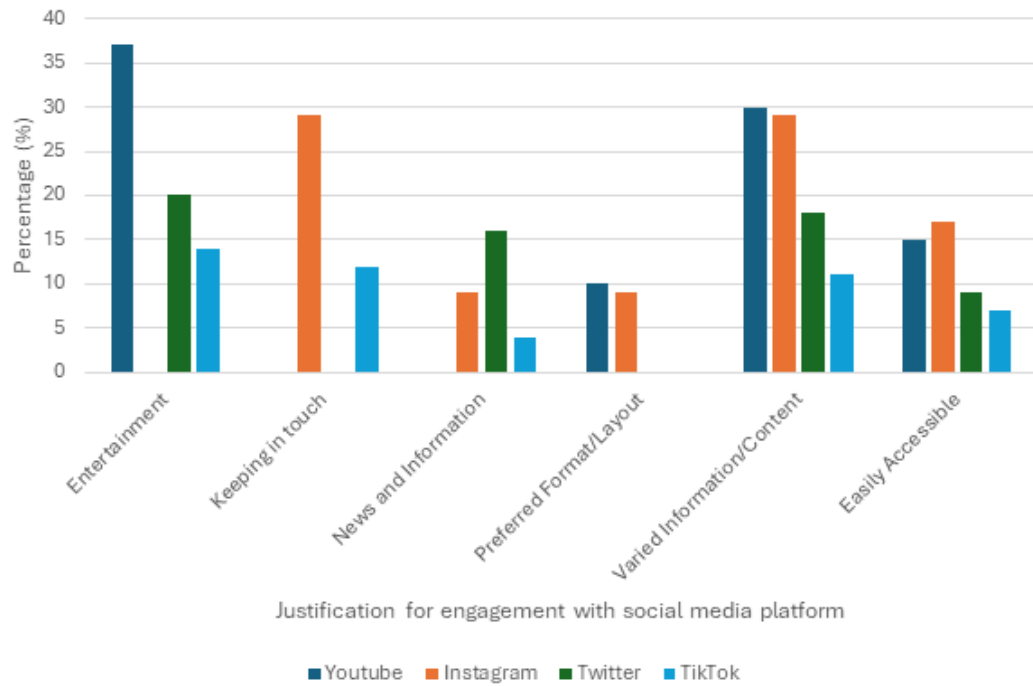


Figure 5.12: An illustration of 'Gen Z' justification for engaging with Instagram, YouTube, TikTok and Twitter after the first UK lockdown

5.4.2 Comparison of Trust During the Global Pandemic

After the first UK lockdown, over half of post-millennials (54 percent) felt that their trust in news had remained consistently the same. It was found that 38 percent had less trust in the news and only 8 percent felt that their trust had increased (Figure 5.13).

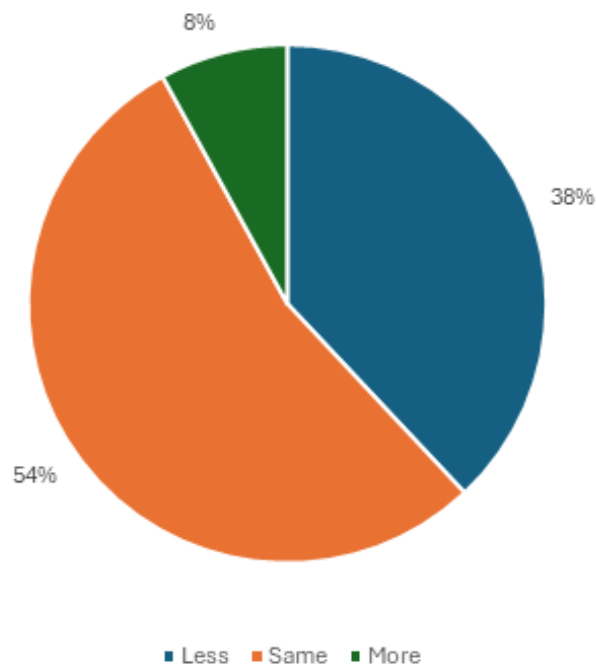


Figure 5.13: An illustration of 'Gen Z' perceived level of trust after first UK lockdown

The most common reason for a decline in trust cited was fake news (21 percent), followed by perceived bias (17 percent), incorrect information (16 percent) and conflicting information (14 percent). The fifth most common reason for a decrease in trust was what was considered a misrepresentation of Black Lives Matter (BLM) following the death of Floyd George in May 2020 (*The New York Times*, 2020) and which occurred during the first UK Lockdown. Sensationalism was the next most common response at 8.6 percent (Figure 5.14).

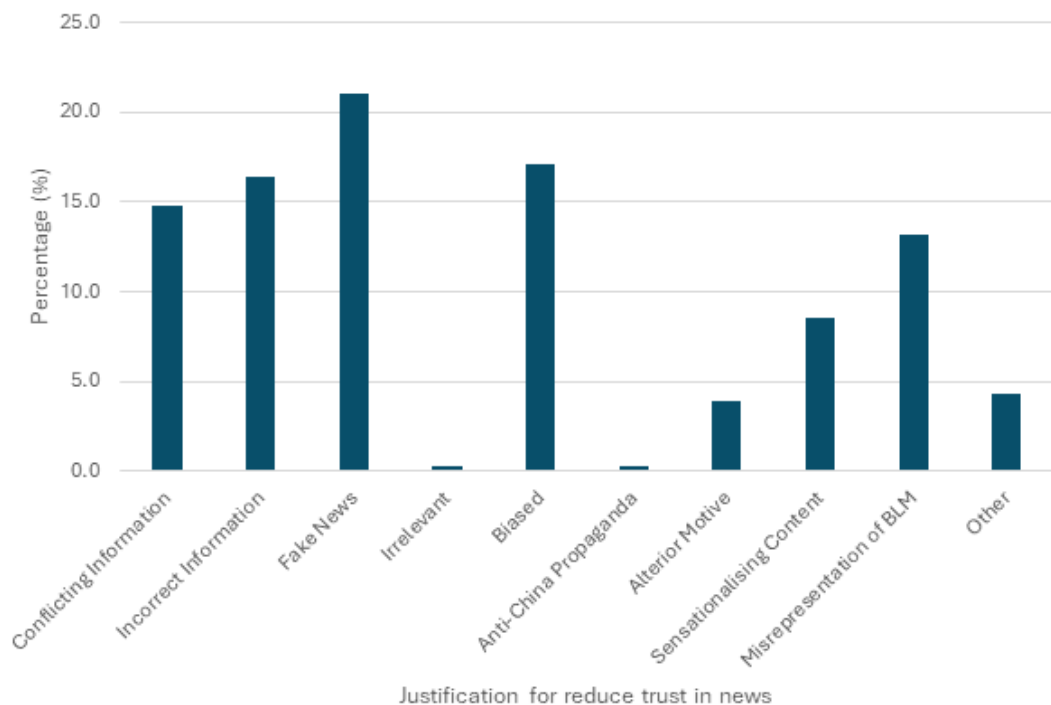


Figure 5.14: An illustration of 'Gen Z' justification of reduced trust in news content following the first UK lockdown

Where trust had increased (Figure 5.15), most felt that this was due to what they felt was more accurate reporting (25 percent) by outlets followed by the perception of more regular updates (10.9 percent) being provided. In both cases when trust had increased or decreased, a proportion of respondents declined to provide an answer and opted for n/a (this was the response respondents were directed to make should their perceptions have remained consistent). As a result, the justification for increase or decrease in trust was coded as 'other' on the assumption that respondents were unable to disclose reasoning as a result. Consequently, this provided an inflated number of

‘other’ responses with regards to increased trust thus leaving some ambiguity as to why most respondents felt that their trust in news had increased.

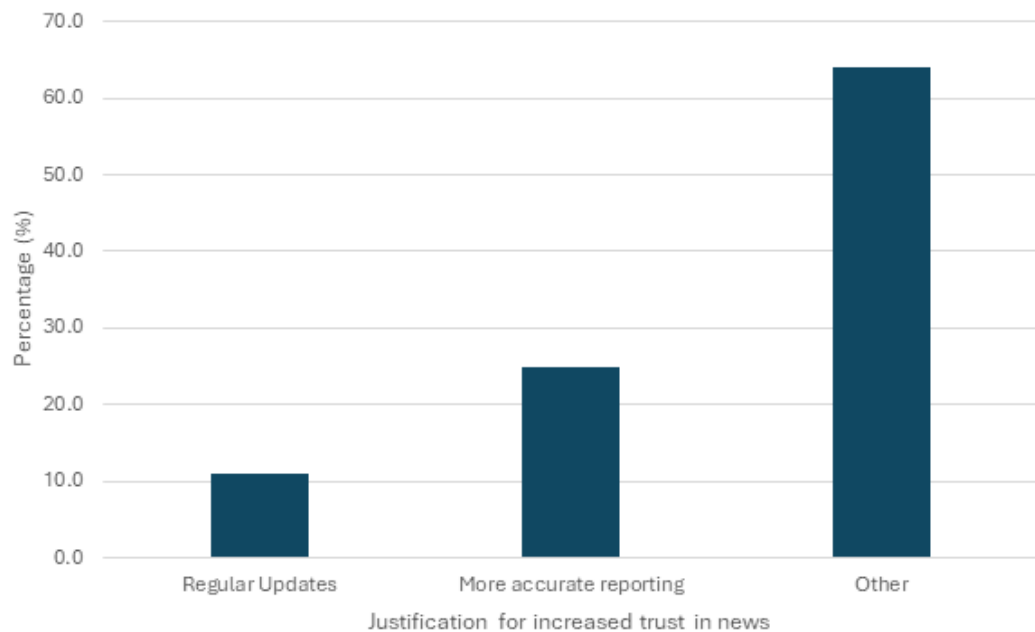


Figure 5.15: An illustration of 'Gen z' justification of increased trust in news content following the first UK lockdown

5.4.3 Comparison of Engagement During the Global Pandemic

Prior to the first UK lockdown, only 5 percent of 'Gen Z' felt that they never engaged with the news and 39.13 percent perceived themselves to be accessing the news at least once a day (Table 5.1). Following lockdown, 61 percent of post-millennials admitted to seeking out the news more, with 27.6 percent remaining the same and 11.4 percent stating they sought the news less (Figure 5.16).

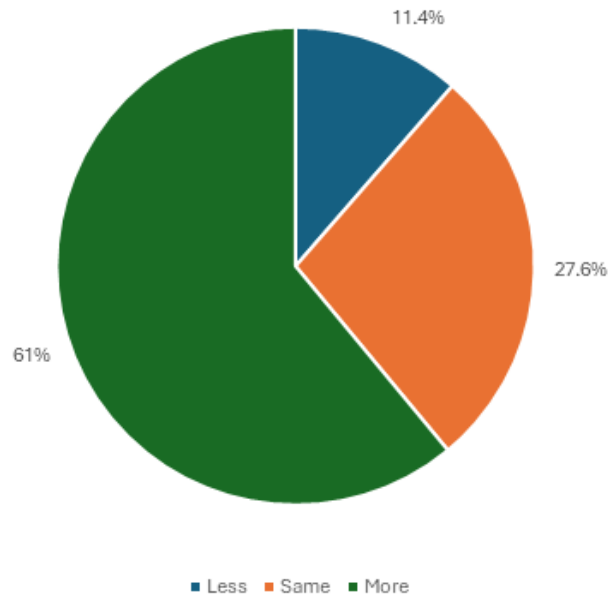


Figure 5.16: An illustration of 'Gen Z' perception of news consumption following the first UK lockdown

Interestingly, 60.2 percent of respondents stating that they had less trust in the news following lockdown admitted to seeking the news more despite their apparent decline in trust placed in the content they were accessing (Figure 5.17). As expected, those who felt they trusted the news more, also felt that they were seeking out the news more following lockdown at 75 percent, with only 11 percent feeling they sought it less and 14 percent remained the same (Figure 5.18). In terms of those who stated a consistent level of trust, the perceived frequency of engagement was slightly more evenly spread between seeking the news more or the same: over half felt that they were seeking the news out more (59 percent) and 31 percent felt their engagement was the same with 9 percent stating they sought information less (Figure 5.19).

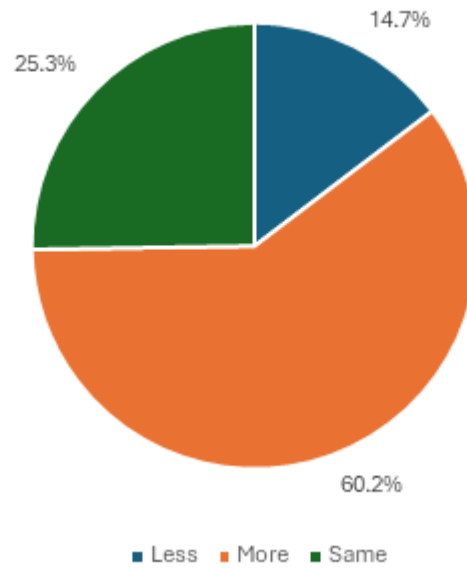


Figure 5.17: An illustration of 'Gen Z' who stated that they had less trust in news following the first UK lockdown, and if they felt they were consuming news less, more or the same.

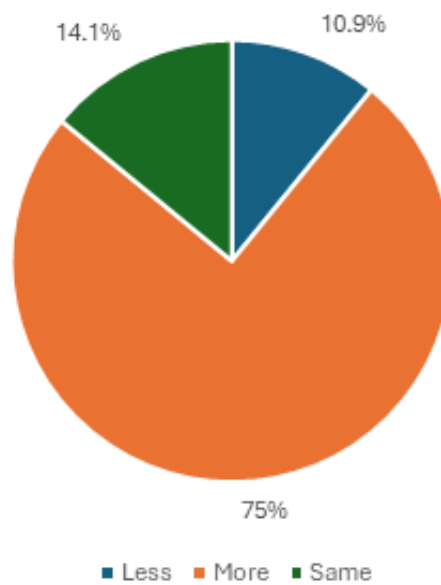


Figure 5.18: An illustration of 'Gen Z' who stated that they had more trust in news following the first UK lockdown, and if they felt they were consuming news less, more or the same.

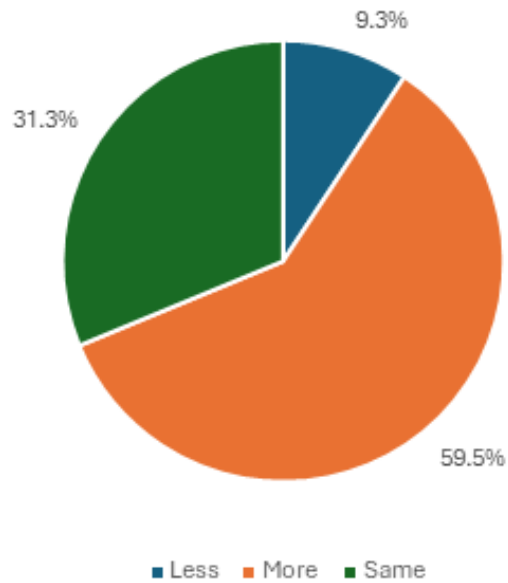


Figure 5.19: An illustration of 'Gen Z' who stated that they had the same level of trust in news following the first UK lockdown, and if they felt they were consuming news less, more or the same.

When asked about their reasons for their news consumption following lockdown, the top three most common reasons for seeking the news less were that it causes anxiety (37 percent), too many bad news stories (25 percent) and repetition (19 percent) other justifications were a decrease in trust of news outlets along with content being perceived as irrelevant to the consumer (Figure 5.20).

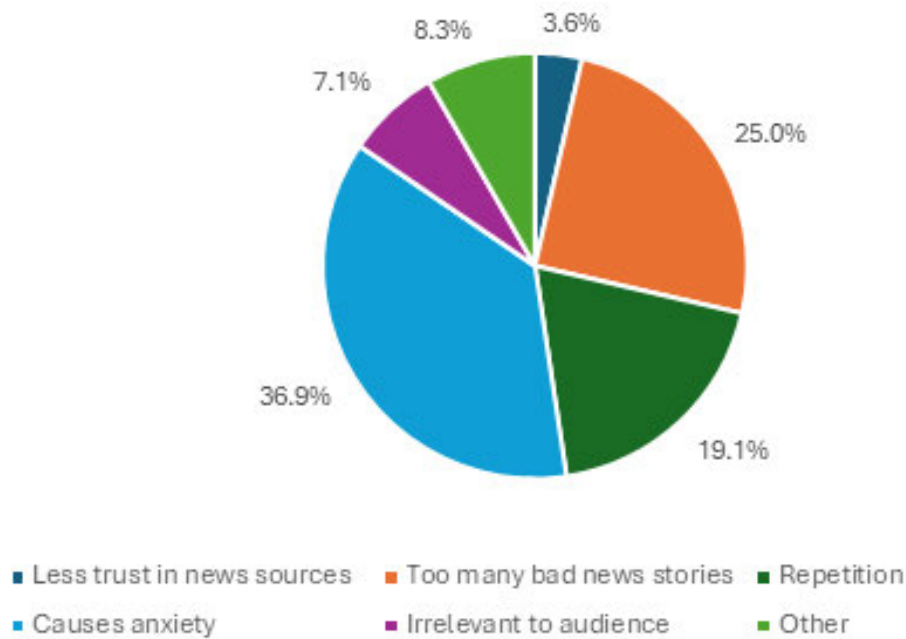


Figure 5.20: Justification of seeking the news less After first UK Lockdown

5.5 Discussion

While television remains the second most popular news source for post-millennials in the UK (Jigsaw Research, 2022; Ofcom, 2020), its continued relevance can be understood through Generational Theory, which characterises Generation Z as digital natives (Palfrey & Gasser, 2011; Twenge, 2017). The digitalisation of television (Rozgonyi, 2019) aligns with their preference for on-demand, visual, and mobile-accessible content, reinforcing the idea that this generation adopts technologies that match their lifestyle and values (Diffusion of Innovation Theory).

From an Actor-Network Theory (ANT) perspective, Generation Z are not passive consumers but active participants in the news ecosystem. The survey findings show that over 70% of respondents share content online, positioning them as actants - agents within a network of human and non-human actors (Latour, 1996). Their digital behaviours (liking, sharing, and occasionally commenting) contribute to the circulation and visibility of news, shaping what becomes prominent in public discourse. The simplicity of sharing (a single click) contrasts with the cognitive effort required to

comment, which may explain the lower engagement in commenting despite high levels of content dissemination.

Interestingly, the reluctance to comment may also reflect generational awareness of digital footprints and reputational risks, a trait consistent with Generation Z's cautious digital engagement (DfE, 2019; Howard *et al.*, 2019). This supports the idea that while they are embedded in digital networks, they are also critically aware of their roles and the implications of their actions within these networks.

The preference for both “soft” news (celebrity, good news) and “hard” news (politics, relevant societal issues) reveals a duality in Generation Z's media diet. This contradicts earlier assumptions of civic disengagement (Horowitz, 2007; Patterson, 2005) and instead supports the view that this generation is politically aware and active, particularly through digital means. Their sharing of political content (ranked third most popular) demonstrates a form of networked activism, where engagement is not always vocal but still influential.

ANT helps us understand this behaviour as part of a distributed agency: Generation Z, social media platforms, algorithms, and news content co-create meaning and influence. For example, Twitter's ranking as the third most trusted platform is not just a reflection of its content but of its networked structure, which allows for diverse viewpoints and real-time discourse. This aligns with Generation Z's generational traits of independence and scepticism (Strauss & Howe, 1991), as they seek out multiple sources and perspectives rather than relying on a single authority.

The findings also show that although trust in news declined for many during the pandemic, engagement increased. This paradox can be explained through Generational Theory: Generation Z's media habits are shaped by a need for immediacy and relevance, even if trust is compromised. Their multi-platform engagement (Kalogeropoulos, 2019) suggests a pragmatic

approach by cross-referencing sources to construct their own understanding of events.

ANT further illuminates this by showing how trust is negotiated within networks. Trust is not a static attribute of a platform but emerges from interactions between users, content, and technological affordances. For instance, although social media is distrusted by many, it remains the most used platform, indicating that its role in the network is too central to be dismissed, even if its credibility is questioned.

Finally, the shift in platform preferences post-lockdown - such as the rise of TikTok and Twitter - demonstrates the fluidity of networks and the adaptability of Generation Z. Their engagement is shaped by both technological affordances (e.g., algorithmic curation, ease of sharing) and socio-political contexts (e.g., COVID-19, BLM movement), reinforcing the need to view them as co-constructors of the news environment.

5.6 Summary

The data presented in Chapter 5 is significant, as it provides valuable insights into the news consumption habits and trust levels of Generation Z, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. This research, based on a survey of 800 post-millennials, offers original findings that enhance understanding of how this demographic interacts with news media, which is crucial for media organisations and researchers aiming to engage this audience effectively.

Chapter 5 is structured around three research questions (RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3), integrating the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter 3. These research questions underpin RQ4, which is reliant on the data obtained from the first three. The findings confirmed that media was the most common platform for news consumption, followed by news organisations' websites and TV. Preferred social media platforms included Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. Over 70% of post-millennials shared content online, with memes being the most popular. However, only 56.7% commented on news content,

indicating a preference for sharing over commenting. Entertainment news was the most popular, followed by personally relevant stories, good news, and political news.

For RQ2, the findings indicated Generation Z generally had low levels of trust in news, with social media being the least trusted platform. News organisation websites and TV news were perceived as more reliable. The top three platforms for accurate news were news organisation websites, TV news, and Twitter. Traditional outlets like radio and newspapers were less trusted.

For RQ3, the findings demonstrated that engagement and trust in news was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Preferences shifted during the pandemic, with Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok becoming more popular. Twitter's usage also increased. Over half of post-millennials felt their trust in news remained the same, but 38% had less trust due to perceived misinformation, bias, and conflicting information. Despite a decline in trust, 61% of post-millennials sought out news more during the pandemic.

The discussion highlights key insights, such as post-millennials being more likely to share news content than comment on it (ANT), a preference for digital and easily accessible news formats (Generational Theory), and that trust in news is not necessarily linked to engagement with a platform. This chapter provides significant insights into Generation Z's news consumption habits and trust levels, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings highlight the unique characteristics and preferences of this demographic from a Generational Theoretical perspective (Strauss and Howe, 2009), offering valuable insights for media organisations and researchers.

Chapter 6

Social Influencers on Generation Z's News Engagement and Trust

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 6 aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the second stage findings of this study, offering greater context and nuance to the first stage results discussed in Chapter 5. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the independent variables within the theoretical framework; specifically educational level, socio-economic status, and parental influence, and their impact on post-millennials' news consumption, engagement, and trust. By cross-referencing these variables with Diffusion of Innovation (Rogers, 2003) and Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) the chapter seeks to understand the underlying factors that shape the news consumption behaviours of post-millennials from a Generational Theoretical perspective (Howe and Strauss, 2000).

The significance of this chapter lies in its ability to address Research Question 4 (RQ4), which aims to identify why post-millennials engage, consume, and trust news the way they do. The chapter is structured as follows: Section 6.1 introduces Research Question 4. Section 6.2 delves into the significance of educational background, examining the impact of different educational levels on news engagement and trust. Section 6.3 focuses on socio-economic status, analysing how varying socio-economic backgrounds influence news consumption behaviours. Section 6.4 explores the role of parental influence, investigating how parental engagement and trust in news shape the news habits of post-millennials. Finally, Section 6.5 provides a discussion of the overall findings, highlighting the interplay between education, socio-economic status, and parental influence in shaping news behaviours.

Social Learning Theory (SLT) is operationalised in addressing RQ4 by examining how Generation Z learn news engagement behaviours through observing and imitating others in their social environment, particularly during

formative years. A clear example of this is parental modelling, where behaviours demonstrated by parents, such as watching, discussing, or reacting to the news, are internalised by children. For instance, a respondent might report that their parents frequently consumed TV news when they were growing up, often watching it during dinner or discussing current events at home. This repeated exposure not only familiarises young people with news consumption as a routine activity but also frames it as a socially valued behaviour.

In analysing data, such responses are coded as instances of observational learning, where the respondent paid attention to the behaviour, retained it, and later reproduced it in their own media habits. SLT also accounts for the motivational factors that sustain these behaviours, such as approval from parents, a sense of being informed, or social recognition among peers. This framework exploration into how different social contexts, such as households where news is trusted versus those where it is dismissed, shape the attitudes and practices Generation Z develop toward news.

In addition to SLT, Diffusion of Innovation Theory (DOI) enables RQ4 to be addressed by examining how Generation Z adopt news engagement behaviours through social influence, with particular attention to the roles of parental influence, socio-economic status, and educational background. In this framework, news engagement practices, such as using news apps, engaging with news on social media, or participating in online discussions, are treated as innovations that spread through social systems over time.

Parental influence can be a key factor in the early stages of adoption. For example, young people whose parents regularly consume and discuss news may be more likely to adopt similar behaviours, especially if those behaviours are modelled consistently and positively reinforced. This aligns with the "knowledge" and "persuasion" stages of DOI, where exposure to an innovation and the perceived credibility of the source influence the likelihood of adoption.

Socio-economic status can shape access to the tools and platforms where news engagement innovations are introduced. Those from higher socio-economic backgrounds may have greater access to digital devices, stable internet, and a wider range of media sources, making them more likely to be early adopters. Conversely, limited access may delay adoption or restrict it to certain platforms, influencing how and when news behaviours spread within peer groups.

Educational level also plays a significant role, as it often correlates with media literacy and critical thinking skills. Individuals with higher levels of education may be more open to adopting new forms of news engagement, such as fact-checking or using diverse sources, and may act as opinion leaders within their networks. These individuals can accelerate the diffusion process by modelling behaviours that others in their social circles then adopt.

Applying DOI in this way, the research analyses the survey data to trace how these social and structural factors influence the spread of news engagement behaviours among Generation Z. This approach highlights not just what behaviours are adopted, but how and why they take hold within different segments of the population.

Overall, by integrating multiple theoretical frameworks and employing robust methodological approaches, this chapter contributes to a deeper understanding of the factors influencing post-millennials' news consumption and trust. The findings have important implications for academia, educators, policymakers, and media organisations, offering insights into how to enhance news literacy and engagement amongst young people.

6.1.1 Kruskal-Wallis Testing: The Groups

The groupings for the Kruskal-Wallis test were created using the framework from the survey as identified in Chapter 3: level of education, socio-economic background, and parental influences. The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to determine whether there were statistically significant differences in responses across these groupings. A result is considered statistically

significant when the p -value is below 0.05, indicating that the observed differences between groups are unlikely to have occurred by chance. In cases where significant differences were identified ($p = < 0.05$), pairwise comparisons were conducted to explore which specific groups differed from one another. These comparisons were followed by an analysis of median values to determine which groups ranked highest overall. For example, participants with higher levels of education were found to access news more frequently than those with lower levels of education. The initial Kruskal-Wallis tests were conducted to explore which platforms different groups engaged with most frequently, as well as the level of trust they placed in news accessed via specific platforms.

The first set of groupings were as follows:

- (A) Seven groups of level of education (Table 6.1)
- (B) Six groups of socio-economic background¹³

Table 6.1: Levels of education (The Parents' Guide, 2020).

The Parents' Guide to
www.theparentsguide.co.uk

Level	Qualification / educational route			
8	Doctorate (PhD)		NVQ 8	
7	Masters degree (MA)		Degree apprenticeship / NVQ 5, 6, 7	
6	Bachelors degree BA or BSc			
5	Foundation degree FdA or FdSc	Higher National Diploma (HND)		
4		Higher National Certificate (HNC)	Higher apprenticeship / NVQ 4	
3	A levels Grades A-E	International Baccalaureate	T Levels	
		BTEC diploma BTEC certificate	Advanced apprenticeship / NVQ 3	
2	GCSE Grades 4-9 (C, B, A or A*)		BTEC first diploma	
			Intermediate apprenticeship / NVQ 2	
1	GCSE Grades 1-3 (D, E, F or G)		Foundation diploma / entry level qualifications	
			Traineeship / NVQ 1	
	Academic route	Vocational route	Applied / work route	

Qualification levels

¹³ A = Higher managerial, administrative, professional e.g. chief exec, senior civil servant, surgeon
 B = Intermediate managerial, administrative, professional e.g. bank manager, teacher
 C = Supervisory, clerical, junior managerial e.g. shop floor supervisor, bank clerk, salesperson.
 C2 = Skilled manual workers e.g. electrician, carpenter.
 D = Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers e.g. assembly line worker, refuse collector, messenger.
 E = Casual labourers, pensioners, unemployed e.g. pensioners without private pensions and anyone living on basic benefits.

Kruskal-Wallis Tests were also conducted using groupings of parent/guardian news engagements. This was to help identify possible parental/guardian influence (as identified within the theoretical framework). These eight groupings were categorised as follows:

- (A) Five groups of frequency of news accessed growing up: more than once a day; daily; weekly; monthly; never.
- (B) Five groups of frequency parents accessed TV news: more than once a day; daily; weekly; monthly; never.
- (C) Five groups of frequency parents accessed radio news: more than once a day; daily; weekly; monthly.
- (D) Five groups of frequency parents accessed print news: more than once a day; daily; weekly; monthly; never.
- (E) Five groups of frequency parents accessed news from a news organisation's website: more than once a day; daily; weekly; monthly; never.
- (F) Five groups of frequency parents accessed news from other websites: more than once a day; daily; weekly; monthly; never.
- (G) Five groups of frequency parents accessed news from social media: more than once a day; daily; weekly; monthly; never.
- (H) Five groups of perceived parent's overall trust in news: extremely trusting; somewhat trusting; neutral; not trusting; extremely not trusting.

Tests of significance were conducted using the above groupings against a set of independent 45 variables (See B.16 of Appendix for full list).

The following sections identify which tests revealed a p -value > 0.05 . The significance of this is then be explored in more depth for each. Section 6.2 will explore the significance of educational level. Section 6.3 will focus on the significant tests conducted using the socio-economic grouping. Finally, Section 6.4 will analyse the significance of parental influence. Section 6.5 will provide a discussion of the overall findings.

6.2 Educational Background

Kruskal-Wallis Tests were conducted with the seven educational groups identified in Section 6.1.1. Seven of the 21 reported a p -value > 0.05 (B.4), signifying that it is unlikely there would be no differences between groups.

6.2.1 Education and Digital Platforms

Van Deursen and van Dijk (2014) found that although people from a lower educational background were more likely to spend more time on the internet, they were less likely than those educated at a higher level to be engaging with a news organisation's websites. Although their research focused on the Dutch population as a whole and was almost a decade old at the time of writing this thesis, their predictions that as the internet developed, inequalities would become more evident are apparent within this research.

This has been evidenced through the Kruskal-Wallis Testing of frequency of accessing news on a news organisation's website and the trust in news accessed via a news organisation's website. Here results showed a greater unlikelihood of differences in educational groups being due to chance (>0.001).

Table 6.2: Kruskal-Wallis Test Results: Educational level and frequency of news accessed via a news organisation's website before first UK Lockdown

Educational Level	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of frequency of news accessed via a news org's website
Level 1	12	5.00
Level 2	69	3.00
Level 3	435	3.00
Level 4	33	3.00
Level 5	6	3.00
Level 6	203	3.00
Level 7	10	3.00

Test Statistics:

$H(6) = 32.77, p = >0.001$

Table 6.3: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Educational level and Frequency of news accessed via a news organisation's website before first UK Lockdown

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
Level 7 - Level 6	0.00	1.000	No
Level 7 - Level 4	0.00	1.000	No
Level 7 - Level 5	0.00	1.000	No
Level 7 - Level 3	0.00	1.000	No
Level 7 - Level 2	0.00	0.562	No
Level 7 - Level 1	2.00	0.009	Yes
Level 6 - Level 4	0.00	1.000	No
Level 6 - Level 5	0.00	1.000	No
Level 6 - Level 3	0.00	0.103	No
Level 6 - Level 2	0.00	0.002	Yes
Level 6 - Level 1	2.00	0.000	Yes
Level 4 - Level 5	0.00	1.000	No
Level 4 - Level 3	0.00	1.000	No
Level 4 - Level 2	0.00	1.000	No
Level 4 - Level 1	2.00	0.023	Yes
Level 5 - Level 3	0.00	1.000	No
Level 5 - Level 2	0.00	1.000	No
Level 5 - Level 1	2.00	0.025	Yes
Level 3 - Level 2	0.00	0.450	No
Level 3 - Level 1	2.00	0.006	Yes
Level 2 - Level 1	2.00	0.309	No

A Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted to examine whether the frequency of accessing news via a news organisation's website before the first UK lockdown, differed across seven educational levels. Frequency was measured using a Likert Scale where 1 = more than once a day and 5 = never. The results revealed a statistically significant difference between the groups, $H(6) = 32.77$, $p < .001$, indicating that at least one educational level group accessed news at a different frequency than the others (Table 6.2).

Post hoc pairwise comparisons using Dunn's test with Bonferroni correction (Table 6.3), showed that individuals with Level 1 education accessed news significantly less frequently than those in Levels 2 through 7, as reflected in

their higher mean rank. Specifically, Level 1 differed significantly from Levels 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7. Additionally, Level 6 differed significantly from Level 2. No other pairwise comparisons were statistically significant, suggesting that aside from Level 1, the remaining educational levels had similar patterns of frequency of news accessed via and news organisation's website.

Table 6.4: Kruskal-Wallis Test Results: Educational level and level of trust in news accessed via a news organisation's website before first UK Lockdown

Educational Level	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of Levels of Trust in news accessed via a news org's website
Level 1	12	5.50
Level 2	69	3.00
Level 3	435	2.00
Level 4	33	3.00
Level 5	6	2.00
Level 6	203	2.00
Level 7	10	2.00

Test Statistics:

$H(6) = 25.302, p = >0.001$

Table 6.5: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Educational level and level of trust in news accessed via a news organisation's website before first UK Lockdown

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
Level 7 - Level 6	0.00	1.000	No
Level 7 - Level 3	0.00	1.000	No
Level 7 - Level 5	0.00	1.000	No
Level 7 - Level 2	1.00	1.000	No
Level 7 - Level 4	1.00	1.000	No
Level 7 - Level 1	3.50	0.038	Yes
Level 6 - Level 3	0.00	0.458	No
Level 6 - Level 5	0.00	1.000	No
Level 6 - Level 2	1.00	0.101	No
Level 6 - Level 4	1.00	0.182	No
Level 6 - Level 1	3.50	0.003	Yes
Level 3 - Level 5	0.00	1.000	No
Level 3 - Level 2	1.00	1.000	No
Level 3 - Level 4	1.00	1.000	No
Level 3 - Level 1	3.50	0.031	Yes
Level 5 - Level 2	1.00	1.000	No
Level 5 - Level 4	1.00	1.000	No
Level 5 - Level 1	3.50	0.113	No
Level 2 - Level 4	0.00	1.000	No
Level 2 - Level 1	2.50	0.399	No
Level 4 - Level 1	2.50	1.000	No

Given the findings regarding frequency, it was therefore unsurprising that a Kruskal-Wallis Test revealed a statistically significant difference in levels of trust (1 = extremely trusting, 1 = extremely not trusting) in news accessed via a news organisation's website across the seven different educational groups presented $H(6) = 25.302, p < .001$ (Table 6.4). This indicates that trust levels differed meaningfully across educational backgrounds. Mean rank scores showed that participants with Level 1 education reported the lowest levels of trust (median rank = 5.50), while all other groups had lower

median ranks (around 2.00–3.00), indicating higher levels of trust (as lower scores reflect greater trust on the 1–5 scale).

Post hoc pairwise comparisons using Dunn’s test with Bonferroni adjustment (Table 6.5) identified that Level 1 differed significantly from Levels 3, 6, and 7, with adjusted p-values of .031, .003, and .038 respectively. No other comparisons reached statistical significance. These findings suggest that individuals with the lowest level of education were significantly less trusting of news from official news websites compared to those with higher educational attainment, while trust levels among the remaining groups were relatively consistent.

6.2.2 Education and Radio News

The popularity of radio has diminished across demographics in recent years, and it is not just post-millennials who have demonstrated a lack of engagement with the platform especially in terms of accessing news (Jigsaw Research, 2022; Ofcom, 2019a). Furthermore, when asked where they would go to access accurate news, out of the traditional news platforms such as television and print news, radio was ranked the lowest (Section 5.3.1). Moreover, it also ranked below social media platforms Twitter, Instagram and YouTube (Figure 5.9) further demonstrating its lack in popularity. Nevertheless, there was an element (although slight) of engagement amongst post-millennials demonstrated in the survey data.

Table 6.6: Kruskal-Wallis Test Results: Educational Level and Frequency of news Accessed via Radio

Educational Level	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of Frequency of news accessed via radio
Level 1	12	4.50
Level 2	69	5.00
Level 3	435	5.00
Level 4	33	4.00
Level 5	6	5.00
Level 6	203	5.00
Level 7	10	4.50

Test Statistics:

$H(6) = 13.688, p = 0.033$

Table 6.7: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) frequency of radio news access against seven levels of education

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
Level 4 - Level 1	0.50	1.000	No
Level 4 - Level 7	0.50	1.000	No
Level 4 - Level 3	1.00	0.230	No
Level 4 - Level 5	1.00	0.479	No
Level 4 - Level 6	1.00	0.027	Yes
Level 4 - Level 2	1.00	0.045	Yes
Level 1 - Level 7	0.00	1.000	No
Level 1 - Level 3	0.50	1.000	No
Level 1 - Level 5	0.50	1.000	No
Level 1 - Level 6	0.50	1.000	No
Level 1 - Level 2	0.50	1.000	No
Level 7 - Level 3	0.50	1.000	No
Level 7 - Level 5	0.50	1.000	No
Level 7 - Level 6	0.50	1.000	No
Level 7 - Level 2	0.50	1.000	No
Level 3 - Level 5	0.00	1.000	No
Level 3 - Level 6	0.00	1.000	No
Level 3 - Level 2	0.00	1.000	No
Level 5 - Level 6	0.00	1.000	No
Level 5 - Level 2	0.00	1.000	No
Level 6 - Level 2	0.00	1.000	No

A Kruskal-Wallis test (Table 6.6) revealed a statistically significant difference in radio news access across educational levels ($H(6) = 13.688, p = 0.033$), suggesting that at least one group differs in usage patterns. Among the seven educational levels. A lower score indicates more frequent use (1 = more than once a day, 5 = never). Level 4 had the lowest mean rank (4.00 = monthly), indicating more frequent radio news consumption compared to others, most of which had a mean rank of 5.00.

Post-hoc analysis using Dunn's test with Bonferroni adjustment (Table 6.7) showed that individuals at Level 4 accessed radio news significantly more often than those at Level 2 ($p = 0.045$) and Level 6 ($p = 0.027$). No other pairwise comparisons were statistically significant. This suggests that radio remains a more relevant or accessible news source for individuals at Educational Level 4, while others tend to use it less frequently.

6.2.3 Education and Childhood News Exposure

In contrast to radio news consumption, there were high levels of significance identified in terms of level of education and the amount of news access within the home when growing up (See Table 6.8).

Table 6.8: Kruskal-Wallis Test Results: Educational Level and Frequency of news accessed in the home when growing up

Educational Level	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of Frequency of news accessed in the home when growing up
Level 1	12	2.00
Level 2	69	2.00
Level 3	435	2.00
Level 4	33	2.00
Level 5	6	2.00
Level 6	203	2.00
Level 7	10	2.00

Test Statistics:

$H(6) = 21.299, p = 0.002$

Table 6.9: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Educational Level and frequency of news accessed in the home when growing up

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
Level 6 - Level 7	0.00	1.000	No
Level 6 - Level 3	0.00	0.003	Yes
Level 6 -Level 5	0.00	0.597	No
Level 6 - Level 4	0.00	0.520	No
Level 6 - Level 2	0.00	0.016	Yes
Level 6 - Level 1	0.00	0.923	No
Level 7 - Level 3	0.00	1.000	No
Level 7 - Level 5	0.00	1.000	No
Level 7 - Level 4	0.00	1.000	No
Level 7 - Level 2	0.00	1.000	No
Level 7 - Level 1	0.00	1.000	No
Level 3 - Level 5	0.00	1.000	No
Level 3 - Level 4	0.00	1.000	No
Level 3 - Level 2	0.00	1.000	No
Level 3 - Level 1	0.00	1.000	No
Level 5 - Level 4	0.00	1.000	No
Level 5 - Level 2	0.00	1.000	No
Level 5 - Level 1	0.00	1.000	No
Level 4 - Level 2	0.00	1.000	No
Level 4 - Level 1	0.00	1.000	No
Level 2 - Level 1	0.00	1.000	No

The frequency is ranked on a scale where lower values indicate more frequent exposure (e.g., 1 = very frequent, 5 = never). Interestingly, all educational levels have the same mean rank of 2.00, suggesting a uniform pattern of news exposure across groups.

Despite this apparent uniformity, the Kruskal-Wallis test reveals a statistically significant difference among the groups: $H(6) = 21.299$, $p = 0.002$. This

indicates that at least one group differs significantly in their reported frequency of news exposure at home during childhood.

The post-hoc Dunn's test with Bonferroni adjustment identifies two significant pairwise differences: Level 6 vs. Level 3 ($p = 0.003$); Level 6 vs. Level 2 ($p = 0.016$)

These results suggest that individuals at Educational Level 6 had a significantly different experience of news exposure at home compared to those at Levels 2 and 3, even though the mean ranks appear identical. This could be due to the large sample sizes and sensitivity of the test to subtle distributional differences not visible in the mean ranks alone. To surmise, while the average reported frequency of news exposure at home appears consistent across educational levels, statistical testing reveals that Level 6 differs significantly from Levels 2 and 3, hinting at nuanced differences in early media environments that may not be immediately obvious from the raw means.

6.2.4 Education and COVID-19 News Consumption

As previously discussed, COVID-19 and subsequent lockdowns arguably changed the way in which audiences engaged with not only digital technology but the news in general (Arens, 2020; Bu *et al.*, 2022). Due to this, respondents to the survey were asked if their engagement with news had changed since the first UK lockdown. The Kruskal-Wallis Test aimed to see if level of education had had any impact on the overall frequency of news consumption following the first UK Lockdown. The scale used ranged from 1 (less news consumption) to 3 (more news consumption), with 2 indicating no change.

Table 6.10: Kruskal-Wallis Test Results: Educational Level and frequency of news Consumption following UK's first lockdown

Educational Level	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of Frequency of news accessed after first UK Lockdown
Level 1	12	2.50
Level 2	69	3.00
Level 3	435	3.00
Level 4	33	2.00
Level 5	6	2.50
Level 6	203	3.00
Level 7	10	3.00

Test Statistics:

$H(6) = 15.919, p = 0.014$

Table 6.11: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Educational Level and frequency of news Consumption following UK's first lockdown

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
Level 4 - Level 5	0.50	0.910	No
Level 4 - Level 1	0.50	1.000	No
Level 4 - Level 2	1.00	0.208	No
Level 4 - Level 3	1.00	0.012	Yes
Level 4 - Level 7	1.00	1.000	No
Level 4 - Level 6	1.00	0.003	Yes
Level 5 - Level 1	0.00	1.000	No
Level 5 - Level 2	0.50	1.000	No
Level 5 - Level 3	0.50	1.000	No
Level 5 - Level 7	0.50	1.000	No
Level 5 - Level 6	0.50	1.000	No
Level 1 - Level 2	0.50	1.000	No
Level 1 - Level 3	0.50	1.000	No
Level 1 - Level 7	0.50	1.000	No
Level 1 - Level 6	0.50	1.000	No
Level 2 - Level 3	0.00	1.000	No
Level 2 - Level 7	0.00	1.000	No
Level 2 - Level 6	0.00	1.000	No
Level 3 - Level 7	0.00	1.000	No
Level 3 - Level 6	0.00	1.000	No
Level 7 - Level 6	0.00	1.000	No

The Kruskal-Wallis test (Table 6.10) revealed a statistically significant difference across educational levels, $H(6) = 15.919$, $p = 0.014$, indicating that the extent to which individuals changed their news consumption habits varied by educational background.

The results showed that individuals at Educational Level 4 had the lowest mean rank (2.00), suggesting they were more likely to report their news consumption had remained the same after the first UK lockdown. In contrast, Levels 1 and 5 had a mean rank of 2.50, while Levels 2, 3, 6, and 7 had the

highest mean rank of 3.00, indicating these groups were more likely to report increased news consumption following the lockdown.

Post-hoc analysis using Dunn's test with Bonferroni adjustment (Table 6.11) identified two significant pairwise differences. Individuals at Level 4 reported significantly less engagement with news after the lockdown compared to those at Level 3 (adjusted $p = 0.012$) and Level 6 (adjusted $p = 0.003$). No other comparisons were statistically significant.

These findings suggest that individuals with Educational Level 4 were less likely to increase their news consumption following the first UK lockdown, while those at Levels 3 and 6 were more likely to report increased engagement. This may reflect differences in media trust, access to digital platforms, or perceived relevance of news during the pandemic. The remaining educational levels showed no significant differences, indicating relatively similar patterns of increased engagement among those groups

6.2.5 Education and Interaction with Online Content

The final Kruskal-Wallis test revealed a statistically significant difference across educational levels, when exploring whether the frequency of commenting on online content varies by educational level.

Table 6.12: Kruskal-Wallis Test Results: Educational Level and Frequency of commenting on online content

Educational Level	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of Frequency of commenting on online content
Level 1	12	4.00
Level 2	69	3.00
Level 3	435	4.00
Level 4	33	4.00
Level 5	6	4.00
Level 6	203	5.00
Level 7	10	4.50

Test Statistics:

$H(6) = 15.788, p = 0.015$

Table 6.13: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Educational Level and Frequency of commenting on online content

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
Level 2 - Level 4	1.00	1.000	No
Level 2 - Level 5	1.00	1.000	No
Level 2 - Level 1	1.00	1.000	No
Level 2 - Level 3	1.00	1.000	No
Level 2 - Level 7	1.50	1.000	No
Level 2 - Level 6	2.00	0.009	Yes
Level 4 - Level 5	0.00	1.000	No
Level 4 - Level 1	0.00	1.000	No
Level 4 - Level 3	0.00	1.000	No
Level 4 - Level 7	0.50	1.000	No
Level 4 - Level 6	1.00	1.000	No
Level 5 - Level 1	0.00	1.000	No
Level 5 - Level 3	0.00	1.000	No
Level 5 - Level 7	0.50	1.000	No
Level 5 - Level 6	1.00	1.000	No
Level 1 - Level 3	0.00	1.000	No
Level 1 - Level 7	0.50	1.000	No
Level 1 - Level 6	1.00	1.000	No
Level 3 - Level 7	0.50	1.000	No
Level 3 - Level 6	1.00	0.062	No
Level 7 - Level 6	0.50	1.000	No

The test produced (Table 6.12) produced an H statistic of 15.788, with a *p*-value of 0.015. This suggests that at least one group differs significantly in how often they comment on online content.

The statistics show (Table 6.12) that individuals at Educational Level 2 had the lowest mean rank (3.00), indicating they comment more frequently than other groups. In contrast, Level 6 had the highest mean rank (5.00), suggesting they comment least frequently. Other levels (1, 3, 4, 5, and 7)

had mean ranks between 4.00 and 4.50, indicating moderate to infrequent commenting behaviour.

Post-hoc analysis using Dunn's test with Bonferroni adjustment (Table 6:13) revealed that the only statistically significant difference was between Level 2 and Level 6 (adjusted $p = 0.009$). This indicates that individuals at Level 2 comment on online content significantly more frequently than those at Level 6. All other pairwise comparisons were not statistically significant.

Therefore, it is interpreted that the highest educational levels showed similar patterns of online commenting, individuals at Educational Level 2 were significantly more active in commenting on online content compared to those at Level 6. This may reflect differences in digital engagement, confidence in online expression, or the types of platforms used by individuals with different educational backgrounds.

6.3 Socio Economic Status

As previously mentioned, Kruskal-Wallis Tests conducted regarding socio-economic status were grouped into six categories. Respondents were asked the socio-economic status of their parents to establish which socio-economic background they were from. The six groupings were as follows: A; B; C1; C2; D; E.

Out of the 21 Kruskal-Wallis Tests conducted (See B.2), 10 reported to having a p -value less than 0.05 signifying that it is unlikely there would be no differences between groups (See B.6).

6.3.1 Socio-economic Status and Radio

As was the case when exploring the frequency of engagement across educational levels. The frequency scale ranged from 1 (more than once a day) to 5 (never), meaning that lower values indicate more frequent radio news consumption.

Table 6.14: Kruskal-Wallis Test Results: Socio-Economic Status and frequency of news accessed via radio

Socio-Economic Status	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of frequency of news accessed via radio
A	126	5.00
B	345	5.00
C1	94	5.00
C2	114	5.00
D	676	5.00
E	55	5.00

Test Statistics:

$$H(5) = 11.120, p = 0.049$$

Table 6.15: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Socio-Economic Status and Frequency of news accessed via radio

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
A - C1	0.00	1.000	No
A - E	0.00	1.000	No
A - B	0.00	0.285	No
A - D	0.00	0.401	No
A - C2	0.00	0.054	No
C1 - E	0.00	1.000	No
C1 - B	0.00	1.000	No
C1 - D	0.00	1.000	No
C1 - C2	0.00	0.822	No
E - B	0.00	1.000	No
E - D	0.00	1.000	No
E - C2	0.00	1.000	No
B - D	0.00	1.000	No
C - C2	0.00	1.000	No
D - C2	0.00	1.000	No

The test (Table 6.14) revealed a statistically significant difference across socio-economic groups: $H(5) = 11.120, p = 0.049$. This suggests that at least one socio-economic group differs in how often they access news via radio.

However, the post-hoc pairwise comparisons using Dunn's test with Bonferroni adjustment (Table 6.15) showed no statistically significant differences between any specific pairs of socio-economic groups. All adjusted p -values were well above the 0.05 threshold, indicating that while the overall distribution of radio news consumption varies slightly across groups, no single group stands out as significantly more or less frequent in their radio news use.

Although the Kruskal-Wallis test indicates a statistically significant variation in radio news consumption across socio-economic statuses, the absence of significant pairwise differences suggests that these variations are subtle and spread across the population. This could imply that radio news consumption is relatively consistent across socio-economic groups, with no sharp divides in usage patterns. The significance in the overall test may reflect minor cumulative differences rather than strong contrasts between specific groups.

6.3.2 Socio-economic Status and Television

The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to determine whether levels of trust in news accessed via television differ across socio-economic groups. The trust scale ranged from 1 (extremely trusting) to 5 (extremely not trusting).

Table 6.16: Kruskal-Wallis Test Result: Socio-Economic Status and Level of trust in TV news

Socio-Economic Status	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of Levels of trust in news accessed via TV
A	126	2.00
B	345	2.00
C1	94	3.00
C2	114	2.50
D	676	3.00
E	55	2.00

Test Statistics:

$$H(5) = 15.540, p = 0.008$$

Table 6.17: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Socio-Economic Status and level of trust in TV news

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
B - A	0.00	1.000	No
B - E	0.00	1.000	No
B - C1	1.00	0.395	No
B - C2	0.50	0.140	No
B - D	1.00	0.069	No
A - E	0.00	1.000	No
A - C1	1.00	1.000	No
A - C2	0.50	0.638	No
A - D	1.00	0.261	No
E - C1	1.00	1.000	No
E - C2	0.50	1.000	No
E - D	1.00	1.000	No
C1 - C2	0.50	1.000	No
C1 - D	0.00	1.000	No
C2 - D	0.50	1.000	No

The test produced a statistically significant result, $H(5) = 15.540$, $p = 0.008$, indicating that there are meaningful differences in trust levels among the socio-economic categories. An examination of the mean ranks (Table 6.16) reveals that individuals in groups A, B, and E reported the highest levels of trust in TV news, with mean ranks of 2.0. Group C2 followed with a slightly higher mean rank of 2.5, suggesting a moderate level of trust. In contrast, groups C1 and D had the highest mean ranks at 3.0, indicating comparatively lower levels of trust in television news.

Despite these differences, the post-hoc pairwise comparisons using Dunn's test with Bonferroni adjustment (Table 6.17) did not identify any statistically significant differences between specific pairs of groups. This means that while the overall distribution of trust varies significantly, no two groups differ enough from each other to be considered statistically distinct in isolation. The implications of these findings are important for understanding how trust in traditional media like television is distributed across the socio-economic spectrum.

The fact that groups A, B, and E, representing both higher and lower ends of the socio-economic scale, exhibit higher trust suggests that television news may still hold broad appeal and credibility among both more affluent and more disadvantaged populations. However, the lower trust observed in groups C1 and D, which often represent middle-income or working-class demographics, may point to a growing scepticism or disengagement from traditional news sources within these segments.

6.3.3 Socio-economic Status and Online News

Statistical significance was found when testing the frequency of news accessed via a news organisation's website against socio-economic status.

Table 6.18: Kruskal-Wallis Test Results: Socio-Economic Status and frequency of news accessed via a news organisation's website

Socio-Economic Status	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of frequency of news accessed via a news organisation's website
A	126	3.00
B	345	3.00
C1	94	3.00
C2	114	4.00
D	676	3.00
E	55	4.00

Test Statistics:

$$H(5) = 24.595, p = 0.000$$

Table 6.19: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Socio-Economic Status and frequency of news accessed via a news organisation's website

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
A - D	0	1.000	No
A - B	0	1.000	No
A - C1	0	0.088	No
A - C2	1	0.004	Yes
A - E	1	0.010	Yes
D - B	0	1.000	No
D - C1	0	1.000	No
D - C2	1	0.257	No
D - E	1	0.208	No
B - C1	0	0.633	No
B - C2	1	0.034	Yes
B - E	1	0.071	No
C1 - C2	1	1.000	No
C1 - E	1	1.000	No
C2 - E	0	1.000	No

The test (Table 6.18) revealed a statistically significant difference across socio-economic groups: $H(5) = 24.595$, $p = 0.000$, indicating that at least one group differs meaningfully in how often they access news online through official news organisations' websites.

The mean ranks show that groups A, B, C1, and D all had a mean rank of 3, suggesting moderate frequency of access. In contrast, groups C2 and E had a mean rank of 4, indicating less frequent use of news websites. This pattern suggests that individuals in groups C2 and E are less engaged with online news platforms compared to those in other socio-economic categories.

Post-hoc pairwise comparisons using Dunn's test with Bonferroni adjustment (Table 6.19) revealed that these differences are statistically significant in a few specific cases. Individuals in group A accessed news websites significantly more frequently than those in group C2 (adjusted $p = 0.004$) and group E (adjusted $p = 0.010$). Additionally, group B also accessed news

websites significantly more frequently than group C2 (adjusted $p = 0.034$). No other pairwise comparisons were statistically significant.

These findings suggest that while most socio-economic groups engage with news organisations' websites at similar levels, individuals in groups C2 and E, often associated with lower-middle and lower socio-economic status, are significantly less likely to access news through official online sources.

Given the findings regarding the frequency of news accessed via a news organisation's website, it was therefore foreseeable that a Kruskal-Wallis Test revealed statistical significance for the level of trust in news accessed via other websites against their socio-economic status.

Table 6.20: Kruskal-Wallis Test Results: Socio-Economic Status and trust in news accessed via a news organisation's website

Socio-Economic Status	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of level of trust in news accessed via a news org's website
A	126	2.00
B	345	2.00
C1	94	2.00
C2	114	2.00
D	676	2.00
E	55	3.00

Test Statistics:
 $H(5) = 28.097, p = 0.000$

Table 6.21: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Socio-Economic Status and trust in news accessed via a news organisation's website

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
B - A	0	1.000	No
B - C2	0	0.290	No
B - C1	0	0.099	No
B - D	0	0.031	Yes
B - E	1	0.001	Yes
A - C2	0	1.000	No
A - C1	0	0.828	No
A - D	0	0.278	No
A - E	1	0.012	Yes
C2 - C1	0	1.000	No
C2 - D	0	1.000	No
C2 - E	1	0.542	No
C1 - D	0	1.000	No
C1 - E	1	1.000	No
D - E	1	1.000	No

The Kruskal-Wallis test (Table 6.20) produced a statistically significant result, $H(5) = 28.097$, $p = 0.000$, indicating that trust in online news content differs meaningfully between at least some of the socio-economic categories.

The mean ranks show that groups A, B, C1, C2, and D all had a mean rank of 2, suggesting relatively high levels of trust in news accessed via official websites. In contrast, group E had a higher mean rank of 3, indicating lower trust in this source of news compared to the other groups.

Post-hoc pairwise comparisons using Dunn's test with Bonferroni adjustment (Table 6.21) revealed several statistically significant differences. Group B reported significantly higher trust than group D (adjusted $p = 0.031$) and group E (adjusted $p = 0.001$). Similarly, group A also reported significantly higher trust than group E (adjusted $p = 0.012$). No other pairwise comparisons were statistically significant.

These findings suggest that while most socio-economic groups exhibit similar and relatively high levels of trust in news accessed via official websites, individuals in group E, typically associated with lower socio-economic status, are significantly less trusting of this medium. This has important implications for digital news organisations and public communication strategies. The lower trust observed in group E may reflect broader issues such as digital exclusion, perceived bias in mainstream media, or a lack of representation in online news narratives.

In addition to official news organisational websites, respondents were asked the frequency the consumed from other websites (such as blogs and independent websites) and their level of trust in this news. A Kruskal-Wallis test against socio-economic status did not identify statistical significance in the level of trust against socio-economic status. However, significance was found in the frequency of news consumed via other websites.

Table 6.22: Kruskal-Wallis test Results: Socio-Economic Status and frequency of news accessed via other websites

Socio-Economic Status	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of frequency of news accessed via other websites
A	126	4.00
B	345	4.00
C1	94	5.00
C2	114	4.00
D	676	4.00
E	55	5.00

Test Statistics:

$H(5) = 14.965, p = 0.011$

Table 6.23: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Socio-Economic Status and frequency of news accessed via other websites

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
A - C2	0	1.000	No
A - B	0	0.021	Yes
A - D	0	0.347	No
A - E	1	0.437	No
A - C1	1	0.010	Yes
C2 - B	0	1.000	No
C2 - D	0	1.000	No
C2 - E	1	1.000	No
C2 - C1	1	1.000	No
B - D	0	1.000	No
B - E	1	1.000	No
B - C1	1	1.000	No
D - E	1	1.000	No
D - C1	1	1.000	No
E - C1	0	1.000	No

The test (Table 6.22) revealed a statistically significant difference between groups: $H(5) = 14.965$, $p = 0.011$, suggesting that at least one socio-economic group accesses news via other websites at a significantly different rate than others.

The mean ranks show that groups A, B, C2, and D had a mean rank of 4, indicating moderate to infrequent use of other websites for news. In contrast, groups C1 and E had a mean rank of 5, suggesting they access these sources less frequently or not at all. This pattern implies that individuals in groups C1 and E are the least likely to use alternative websites for news, while the other groups engage with them slightly more often.

Post-hoc pairwise comparisons using Dunn's test with Bonferroni adjustment (Table 6.23) revealed two statistically significant differences. Group A accessed news via other websites significantly more frequently than group B

(adjusted $p = 0.021$) and group C1 (adjusted $p = 0.010$). No other pairwise comparisons were statistically significant.

These findings suggest that while overall use of alternative news websites is relatively low across all socio-economic groups, there are subtle but meaningful differences in engagement. Specifically, individuals in group A, typically associated with higher socio-economic status, are more likely to access news from non-traditional or non-mainstream websites compared to those in groups B and C1.

Table 6.24: Kruskal-Wallis Test Result: Socio-Economic Status and frequency of news accessed via a News App

Socio-Economic Status	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of frequency of news accessed via a News App
A	126	3.00
B	345	3.00
C1	94	4.00
C2	114	3.00
D	676	3.00
E	55	4.00

Test Statistics:

$H(5) = 18.539, p = 0.002$

Table 6.25: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Socio-Economic Status and frequency of news accessed via a News App

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
A - B	0	1.000	No
A - C2	0	1.000	No
A - D	0	1.000	No
A - E	1	0.513	No
A - C1	1	0.003	Yes
B - C2	0	1.000	No
B - D	0	1.000	No
B - E	1	1.000	No
B - C1	1	0.006	Yes
C2 - D	0	1.000	No
C2 - E	1	1.000	No
C2 - C1	1	1.000	No
D - E	1	1.000	No
D - C1	1	1.000	No
E - C1	0	1.000	No

A Kruskal-Wallis test (Table 6.24) revealed a statistically significant difference between groups: $H(5) = 18.539$, $p = 0.002$, indicating that at least one socio-economic group accesses news via apps at a significantly different rate than others.

The mean ranks show that groups A, B, C2, and D had a mean rank of 3, suggesting moderate use of news apps. In contrast, groups C1 and E had a mean rank of 4, indicating less frequent use. This suggests that individuals in groups C1 and E are less likely to engage with news through mobile apps compared to other socio-economic groups.

Post-hoc pairwise comparisons using Dunn's test with Bonferroni adjustment revealed two statistically significant differences (Table 6.25). Group A accessed news via apps significantly more frequently than group C1 (adjusted $p = 0.003$), and group B also accessed news apps more frequently than group C1 (adjusted $p = 0.006$). No other pairwise comparisons were statistically significant.

These findings suggest that while most socio-economic groups engage with news apps at similar levels, individuals in group C1, typically associated with lower-middle or skilled working-class status, are significantly less likely to use this medium.

Table 6.26: Kruskal-Wallis Test Results: Socio-Economic Status and trust in news accessed via News Apps

Socio-Economic Status	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of level of trust in news accessed via a news App
A	126	3.00
B	345	3.00
C1	94	4.00
C2	114	3.00
D	676	4.00
E	55	4.00

Test Statistics:

$$H(5) = 14.532, p = 0.013$$

Table 6.27: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Socio-Economic Status and trust in news accessed via News Apps

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
A - B	0	1.000	No
A - C2	0	1.000	No
A - E	1	0.771	No
A - D	1	0.438	No
A - C1	1	0.089	No
B - C2	0	1.000	No
B - E	1	1.000	No
B - D	1	0.613	No
B - C1	1	0.094	No
C2 - E	1	1.000	No
C2 - D	1	1.000	No
C2 - C1	1	0.463	No
E - D	0	1.000	No
E - C1	0	1.000	No
D - C1	0	1.000	No

A Kruskal-Wallis test also produced a statistically significant result when examining whether levels of trust in news accessed via a news app differ across socio-economic groups (Table 6.26), $H(5) = 14.532$, $p = 0.013$. This indicates that at least one socio-economic group differs meaningfully in their level of trust in news delivered through apps.

The mean ranks show that groups A, B, and C2 had a mean rank of 3, suggesting moderate levels of trust in news apps. In contrast, groups C1, D, and E had a mean rank of 4, indicating lower levels of trust. This suggests a divide in trust, with some groups being more sceptical of app-based news content.

However, the post-hoc pairwise comparisons using Dunn's test with Bonferroni adjustment (Table 6.27) revealed that none of the differences between specific groups were statistically significant. Although group C1 consistently showed lower trust compared to groups A and B, the adjusted p -values (0.089 and 0.094, respectively) did not meet the threshold for significance. This means that while the overall test indicates a difference in trust levels, no single pair of groups differs enough to be considered statistically distinct.

These findings suggest that trust in news apps varies across socio-economic groups, but the differences are subtle rather than sharply defined. The lower trust observed in groups C1, D, and E may reflect concerns about the credibility, accessibility, or usability of app-based news platforms among these populations.

Table 6.28: Kruskal-Wallis Test Result: Socio-Economic Status and frequency of News accessed via social media

Socio-Economic Status	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of frequency of news accessed via social media
A	126	2.50
B	345	2.00
C1	94	2.00
C2	114	2.00
D	676	3.00
E	55	2.00

Test Statistics:

$$H(5) = 14.535, p = 0.013$$

Table 6.29: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Socio-Economic Status and frequency of news accessed via social media

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
B - C1	0	1.000	No
B - E	0	1.000	No
B - C2	0	0.234	No
B - D	1	0.502	No
B - A	0.5	0.034	Yes
C1 - E	0	1.000	No
C1 - C2	0	1.000	No
C1 - D	1	1.000	No
C1 - A	0.5	1.000	No
E - C2	0	1.000	No
E - D	1	1.000	No
E - A	0.5	1.000	No
C2 - D	1	1.000	No
C2 - A	0.5	1.000	No
D - A	0.5	1.000	No

The Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted to determine whether there are differences in how frequently individuals from different socio-economic status groups access news via social media (Table 6.28). The test result, $H(5) = 14.535$ with a p -value of 0.013, indicates a statistically significant

difference in news access frequency among the six socio-economic status groups.

Examining the mean ranks, groups B, C1, C2, and E all had a mean rank of 2, suggesting they access news via social media more frequently than the others. Group A had a slightly higher mean rank of 2.5, indicating somewhat less frequent access. Group D had the highest mean rank of 3, suggesting it accesses news the least frequently overall.

Post-hoc pairwise comparisons using Dunn's test with Bonferroni adjustment were carried out to identify specific group differences (Table 6.29). The only statistically significant difference was found between Group B and Group A, with Group A accessing news less frequently than Group B. All other comparisons were not statistically significant, meaning that although the overall test found a difference, most individual group comparisons did not show meaningful differences after adjusting for multiple comparisons.

In conclusion, while there is an overall difference in how frequently people from different socio-economic status groups access news via social media, the only clear and statistically significant difference is between Group A and Group B. Group D appears to access news the least frequently, but this difference was not statistically significant in the pairwise comparisons.

Table 6.30: Kruskal-Wallis Test: Socio-Economic Status and frequency of news accessed in the home when growing up

Socio-Economic Status	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of frequency of news accessed in the home when growing up
A	126	2.00
B	345	2.00
C1	94	2.00
C2	114	2.00
D	676	2.00
E	55	2.00

Test Statistics:

$H(5) = 23.448, p = 0.000$

Table 6.31: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Socio-Economic Status and frequency of news accessed in the home when growing up

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
A - B	0	1.000	No
A - C1	0	1.000	No
A - E	0	0.669	No
A - D	0	0.169	No
A - C2	0	0.002	Yes
B - C1	0	1.000	No
B - E	0	1.000	No
B - D	0	0.278	No
B - C2	0	0.002	Yes
C1 - E	0	1.000	No
C1 - D	0	1.000	No
C1 - C2	0	1.000	No
E - D	0	1.000	No
E - C2	0	1.000	No
D - C2	0	1.000	No

The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to assess whether there are differences in how frequently individuals from different socio-economic status groups accessed news in the home during their upbringing (Table 6.30). As with the previous tests, frequency was measured on a scale where lower values indicate more frequent access. The test result, $H(5) = 23.448$ with a p -value of 0.000, indicates a statistically significant difference in reported childhood news access across the socio-economic status groups.

Despite the mean ranks being uniformly reported as 2 for all groups, the statistical test still detected a significant difference. This suggests that while the rounded mean ranks appear identical, the underlying distributions of responses differ enough to produce a significant result. This is not uncommon in non-parametric tests, which are sensitive to the ranks of individual data points rather than just the averages.

Post-hoc pairwise comparisons using Dunn's test with Bonferroni adjustment were conducted to identify where these differences lie (Table 6.31). The only

statistically significant differences were between Group A and Group C2, and between Group B and Group C2. In both cases, the adjusted p -value was 0.002, indicating that individuals from Group C2 reported significantly different frequencies of news access in the home during childhood compared to those from Groups A and B. All other comparisons were not statistically significant.

In summary, although the mean ranks appear the same across all socio-economic status groups, the Kruskal-Wallis test revealed significant differences in childhood news access. These differences are specifically associated with Group C2, which stands out in comparison to Groups A and B. The significant difference in childhood news access associated with socio-economic status group C2 suggests that early exposure to news and current affairs may not be evenly distributed across social groups.

Table 6.32: Kruskal-Wallis Test Results: Socio-Economic Status and frequency of commenting on online content

Socio-Economic Status	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of frequency of commenting on online content
A	126	4.00
B	345	4.00
C1	94	4.50
C2	114	4.00
D	676	4.00
E	55	3.00

Test Statistics:

$H(5) = 28.495, p = 0.000$

Table 6.33: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Socio-Economic Status and frequency of commenting on online content

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
E - C2	1	0.288	No
E - A	1	0.003	Yes
E - CB	1	0.000	Yes
E - D	1	0.006	Yes
E - C1	1.5	0.000	Yes
C2 - A	0	1.000	No
C2 - B	0	0.247	No
C2 - D	0	1.000	No
C2 - C1	0.5	0.057	No
A - B	0	1.000	No
A - D	0	1.000	No
A - C1	0.5	1.000	No
B - D	0	1.000	No
B - C1	0.5	1.000	No
D - C1	0.5	1.000	No

The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to examine whether different socio-economic groups differ in how frequently they comment on online content (Table 6.32). The test result, $H(5) = 28.495$ with a p -value of 0.000, indicates a statistically significant difference in commenting behaviour across the socio-economic groups.

Looking at the mean ranks, most groups (A, B, C2, and D) had a mean rank of 4, suggesting similar levels of engagement. Group C1 had a slightly higher mean rank of 4.5, indicating slightly less frequent commenting. Group E, however, had a lower mean rank of 3, suggesting that individuals in this group comment on online content more frequently than those in other groups.

Post-hoc pairwise comparisons using Dunn's test with Bonferroni adjustment (Table 6.33) revealed that group E was significantly different from several other groups. Specifically, group E commented significantly more frequently

than groups A, B, D, and C1. The differences between group E and group C2 were not statistically significant, nor were any of the comparisons among the other groups.

These results suggest that individuals from socio-economic status group E are more actively engaged in online commenting than those from higher status groups.

6.4 Parental Influence

As identified in Chapter 3, parental modelling plays a part in the development of children and young adults. This can be applied to how each generation consumes and engages with the news: they have learnt to do so in part, from those that have raised them. Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) provides a theoretical foundation for understanding this process, positing that individuals acquire behaviours through observation, imitation, and reinforcement. In the context of news consumption, this means that Generation Z may internalise the news habits, preferences, and trust levels demonstrated by their parents or guardians during formative years. For example, if parents regularly consumed television news or discussed current events at home, their children are more likely to perceive news engagement as a normative and valued behaviour. This observational learning is reinforced when such behaviours are positively modelled and socially rewarded, thereby shaping long-term attitudes and practices.

As a result, Kruskal-Wallis Testing was conducted to identify any significance in parental/guardian behaviour in terms of news engagement and perceptions. The table in Section B.7 demonstrates that out of the 45 tests conducted, only 15 did not report statistical significance. This indicates that it is unlikely that parental modelling has no bearing on news consumption and trust.

To allow for greater cogency, this section is divided into eight parts: Section 6.4.1 evaluates the influence of the regularity of news consumed within the home when growing up to establish any connection between exposure to news in formative years, to choices of platforms and attitudes in early

adulthood. Sections 6.4.2 – 6.4.8 discuss if the frequency with which parents or guardians engaged with the news via specific platforms had any bearing on the frequency with which Generation Z engage with news through these platforms. These sections explore the levels of trust post-millennials had in these platforms before the first UK lockdown compared to their parents' engagement with the platforms. Additionally, these sections also identify if the frequency of parental access to certain platforms has any influence over levels of trust in news content following the first UK lockdown. Similarly, Section 6.4.8 explores how the perceived level of trust parents/guardians have in news accessed may influence post-millennial trust in news before and after lockdown.

6.4.1 Influence of frequency of news consumption in the home when growing up

The following Kruskal-Wallis Tests discussed within this section, aimed to identify if there was any significance between the amount of news accessed within the home when growing up (this was regardless of platform) and how post-millennials were accessing news: through which platforms, frequency and overall trust in news (pre and post first UK lockdown). To run the Kruskal-Wallis Test, there were five categorical groupings altogether. These groupings were based on the amount of news accessed within the home when growing up. These were as follows: more than once a day; daily; once a week; monthly; never.

Table 6.34: Kruskal-Wallis Test Results: Frequency of news accessed in the home growing up and frequency of TV news consumed

Frequency of news accessed in the home growing up	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of frequency of TV news accessed
More than once a day	148	3.00
Daily	444	3.00
Weekly	148	4.00
Monthly	38	4.00
Never	22	5.00

Test Statistics:

$H(4) = 66.963, p = >0.001$

Table 6.35: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Frequency of news accessed in the home growing up and frequency of TV news consumed

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
More than once a day - Daily	0	0.000	Yes
More than once a day - Weekly	1	0.000	Yes
More than once a day - Monthly	1	0.000	Yes
More than once a day - Never	2	0.000	Yes
Daily - Weekly	1	0.136	No
Daily - Monthly	1	0.000	Yes
Daily - Never	2	0.001	Yes
Weekly - Monthly	0	0.078	No
Weekly - Never	1	0.062	No
Monthly - Never	1	1.000	No

A Kruskal-Wallis Test examined if TV news consumption differed amongst groupings with varying frequency of news access within the home when growing up (Table 6.34). The scale runs from 1 (more than once a day) to 5 (never), so lower scores mean more frequent viewing. The test result ($H = 66.963$, $p = < 0.001$) illustrated that the differences are statistically significant.

People from homes where news was accessed more than once a day or daily had a mean rank of 3, showing they watched TV news more often. Those from homes where news was accessed weekly or monthly had a mean rank of 4, and those from homes where news was never accessed had a mean rank of 5, indicating they watched TV news the least.

The post-hoc tests (Table 6.35) demonstrated that people from homes with very frequent news access (more than once a day) watched significantly more TV news than all other groups. Daily viewers also differed significantly from monthly and never groups, but not from weekly viewers. There were no

significant differences between weekly, monthly, and never groups, suggesting similarly low levels of TV news viewing among them.

This suggests that growing up in a home where news was accessed frequently is linked to more frequent TV news viewing, while infrequent or no exposure to news at home is linked to lower engagement with TV news.

Table 6.36: Kruskal-Wallis Test Results: Frequency of news accessed in the home growing up and level of trust in TV news

Frequency of news accessed in the home growing up	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of level of trust in TV news
More than once a day	148	2.00
Daily	444	2
Weekly	148	2
Monthly	38	3
Never	22	6

Test Statistics:

$H(4) = 42.974, p = >0.001$

Table 6.37: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Frequency of news accessed in the home growing up and level of trust in TV news

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
More than once a day - Daily	0	0.567	No
More than once a day - Weekly	0	0.141	No
More than once a day - Monthly	1	0.011	Yes
More than once a day - Never	4	0.000	Yes
Daily - Weekly	0	1.000	No
Daily - Monthly	1	0.149	No
Daily - Never	4	0.000	Yes
Weekly - Monthly	1	0.914	No
Weekly - Never	4	0.000	Yes
Monthly - Never	3	0.036	Yes

A Kruskal-Wallis Test examined whether the level of trust in TV news differs depending on how frequently news was accessed in the home during childhood (Table 6.36). The test result was statistically significant, with $H(4) = 42.974$ and $p = < 0.001$, indicating that at least one group differs significantly from the others in terms of trust in TV news.

Looking at the mean ranks, individuals from homes where news was accessed more than once a day, daily, or weekly all had a mean rank of 2, suggesting relatively high levels of trust in TV news. Those from homes with monthly news access had a mean rank of 3, while those from homes where news was never accessed had a mean rank of 6, indicating the lowest level of trust.

The pairwise comparisons using Dunn's test with Bonferroni adjustment (Table 6.37) show that there were no significant differences in trust between the high-frequency groups, more than once a day, daily, and weekly. However, individuals from homes with more than once a day access had significantly higher trust than those from homes with monthly or no access. Similarly, daily and weekly groups also showed significantly higher trust than

the never group. There was also a significant difference between the monthly and never groups, with the never group showing much lower trust.

The results suggest that growing up in a home where news was accessed regularly is associated with higher trust in TV news. The most notable drop in trust occurs among those who had no exposure to news in the home, highlighting the potential long-term influence of early media environments on attitudes toward news sources.

Table 6.38: Kruskal-Wallis Test Results: Frequency of news accessed in the home growing up and level of trust in news accessed before the first UK lockdown

Frequency of news accessed in the home growing up	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of level of trust in news accessed before UK lockdown
More than once a day	148	2.00
Daily	444	2.00
Weekly	148	2.00
Monthly	38	3.00
Never	22	3.00

Test Statistics:

$H(4) = 13.007, p = 0.011$

Table 6.39: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Frequency of news accessed in the home growing up and level of trust in news accessed before the first UK lockdown

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
More than once a day - Weekly	0	1.000	No
More than once a day - Daily	0	1.000	No
More than once a day - Monthly	1	0.112	No
More than once a day - Never	1	0.087	No
Weekly - Daily	0	1.000	No
Weekly - Monthly	1	0.148	No
Weekly - Never	1	0.109	No
Daily - Monthly	1	0.411	No
Daily - Never	1	0.267	No
Monthly - Never	0	1.000	No

A Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted to identify whether trust in news accessed before the first UK lockdown varied depending on how frequently news was accessed in the home during childhood Table (6.38). The test result was statistically significant, with $H(4) = 13.007$ and $p = 0.011$, suggesting that there are differences in trust levels between at least some of the groups.

The mean ranks show that individuals from homes where news was accessed more than once a day, daily, or weekly all had a mean rank of 2, indicating relatively high trust in news accessed before the lockdown. Those from homes with monthly or no news access had a mean rank of 3, suggesting slightly lower trust.

However, the pairwise comparisons using Dunn's test with Bonferroni adjustment (Table 6.39) show that none of the differences between groups were statistically significant. All adjusted p -values were above the 0.05 threshold, meaning that although the overall test indicated a difference, no

specific pair of groups differed significantly from one another after correcting for multiple comparisons.

To surmise, while the overall test suggests some variation in trust based on childhood news exposure, the differences between individual groups are not strong enough to be statistically significant. This may indicate a general trend where frequent exposure to news in the home is linked to slightly higher trust in news before the lockdown, but the effect is not pronounced.

Table 6.40: Kruskal-Wallis Test Results: Frequency of news accessed in the home growing up and frequency of news accessed via radio

Frequency of news accessed in the home growing up	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of frequency of news accessed via radio
More than once a day	148	4.00
Daily	444	5.00
Weekly	148	5.00
Monthly	38	5.00
Never	22	5.00

Test Statistics:

$H(4) = 22.549, p = >0.001$

Table 6.41: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Frequency of news accessed in the home growing up and frequency of news accessed via Radio

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
More than once a day - Daily	1	0.022	Yes
More than once a day - Weekly	1	0.031	Yes
More than once a day - Monthly	1	0.017	Yes
More than once a day - Never	1	0.002	Yes
Daily - weekly	0	1.000	No
Daily - Monthly	0	0.988	No
Daily - Never	0	0.105	No
Weekly - Monthly	0	1.000	No
Weekly - Never	0	0.270	No
Monthly - Never	0	1.000	No

This analysis (Table 6.40) examined whether the frequency of listening to news on the radio differed based on how often news was accessed in the home during childhood. The Kruskal-Wallis result, $H(4) = 22.549$ with $p < 0.001$, showed that there were statistically significant differences between at least some of the groups.

The mean ranks indicated that individuals from homes where news was accessed more than once a day had a mean rank of 4, while all other groups: daily, weekly, monthly, and never, had a mean rank of 5. Since lower ranks reflected more frequent radio news access, this suggested that those from high-news households listened to radio news more often.

The post-hoc comparisons using Dunn's test with Bonferroni correction showed that the group with more than once a day access differed significantly from all other groups (Table 6.41). Each of these comparisons had p -values below 0.05, confirming the differences were statistically significant. However, there were no significant differences among the other groups, indicating that their radio news habits were largely the same.

In summary, people who grew up in homes where news was accessed very frequently were more likely to have accessed news via radio. Those from homes with less frequent or no news access showed similarly low levels of radio news use.

Table 6.42: Kruskal-Wallis Test Results: Frequency of the news accessed in the home growing up and frequency of print news accessed

Frequency of news accessed in the home growing up	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of frequency of print news accessed
More than once a day	148	5.00
Daily	444	5.00
Weekly	148	5.00
Monthly	38	5.00
Never	22	5.00

Test Statistics:

$$H(4) = 17.694, p = 0.001$$

Table 6.43: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Frequency of the news accessed in the home growing up and frequency of print news accessed

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
More than once a day - Weekly	0	0.470	No
More than once a day - Daily	0	0.003	Yes
More than once a day - Monthly	0	0.116	No
More than once a day - Never	0	0.051	No
Weekly - Daily	0	1.000	No
Weekly - Monthly	0	1.000	No
Weekly - Never	0	0.735	No
Daily - Monthly	0	1.000	No
Daily - Never	0	1.000	No
Monthly - Never	0	1.000	No

This analysis (Table 6.42). examined whether the frequency of accessing print news varied depending on how often news was accessed in the home during childhood. The Kruskal-Wallis test result, $H(4) = 17.694$ with a p -

value of 0.001, showed that there were statistically significant differences between at least some of the groups.

Despite this overall significance, the mean ranks for all groups, whether individuals grew up in homes with very frequent, daily, weekly, monthly, or no news access, were all recorded as 5. This consistency suggested that, in practice, there was little variation in how often people accessed print news, regardless of their early exposure to news in the home.

The post-hoc analysis using Dunn's test with Bonferroni correction (Table 6.43) revealed that only one comparison was statistically significant: between those from homes with more than once a day access and those with daily access p -value was 0.003. All other comparisons showed no meaningful differences, with p -values well above the threshold for significance.

To conclude, although the overall test indicated some differences in print news access based on childhood news habits, the actual variation appeared minimal. The only statistically significant difference occurred between the two most frequent exposure groups, and even that was not reflected in the mean ranks, suggesting the practical impact was likely negligible.

Table 6.44: Kruskal-Wallis Test Results: Frequency of news accessed in the home growing up and frequency of news accessed via a news organisation's website

Frequency of news accessed in the home growing up	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of frequency of news accessed via a news org's website
More than once a day	148	3.00
Daily	444	3.00
Weekly	148	3.00
Monthly	38	4.00
Never	22	4.50

Test Statistics:

$H(4) = 40.459, p = < 0.001$

Table 6.45: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Frequency of News accessed in the home growing up and frequency of news accessed via a news organisation's website

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
More than once a day - Daily	0	0.776	No
More than once a day - Weekly	0	0.018	Yes
More than once a day - Monthly	1	0.000	Yes
More than once a day - Never	1.5	0.000	Yes
Daily - Weekly	0	0.399	No
Daily - Monthly	1	0.002	Yes
Daily - Never	1.5	0.000	Yes
Weekly - Monthly	1	0.169	No
Weekly - Never	1.5	0.016	Yes
Monthly - Never	0.5	1.000	No

This analysis (Table 6.44) explored whether the frequency of accessing news via a news organisation's website differed depending on how often news was accessed in the home during childhood. The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to compare the groups, as the outcome variable was ordinal. The result, $H(4) = 40.459$ with $p = < 0.001$, indicated a statistically significant difference between at least some of the groups.

The mean ranks showed that individuals from homes where news was accessed more than once a day, daily, or weekly all had a mean rank of 3, suggesting relatively frequent use of news websites. Those from homes with monthly access had a mean rank of 4, and those from homes where news was never accessed had a mean rank of 4.5, indicating less frequent use.

The post-hoc comparisons using Dunn's test with Bonferroni adjustment revealed several significant differences (Table 6.45). People from homes with more than once a day access used news websites significantly more often than those from weekly, monthly, or never groups. Similarly, those from daily-access homes used news websites more frequently than those

from monthly or never-access homes. The weekly group also differed significantly from the never group. However, there were no significant differences between the more than once a day and daily groups, or between monthly and never groups.

In summary, individuals who grew up in homes with frequent news exposure were more likely to access news through official websites. The most notable differences were between those with high exposure and those with little or no exposure, suggesting that early habits around news consumption may influence how people engage with digital news sources later in life.

Table 6.46: Kruskal-Wallis Test Results: Frequency of news accessed in the home growing up and level of trust in news accessed via a news organisation's website

Frequency of news accessed in the home growing up	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of level of trust in news accessed via a news org's website
More than once a day	148	2.00
Daily	444	2.00
Weekly	148	2.00
Monthly	38	3.00
Never	22	3.00

Test Statistics:

$H(4) = 15.665, p = 0.004$

Table 6.47: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Frequency of news accessed in the home growing up and level of trust in news accessed via a news organisation's website

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
More than once a day - Daily	0	1.000	No
More than once a day - Weekly	0	1.000	No
More than once a day - Monthly	1	0.385	No
More than once a day - Never	1	0.003	Yes
Daily - Weekly	0	1.000	No
Daily - Monthly	1	1.000	No
Daily - Never	1	0.017	Yes
Weekly - Monthly	1	1.000	No
Weekly - Never	1	0.048	Yes
Monthly - Never	0	0.899	No

This analysis (Table 6.46) investigated whether trust in news accessed through a news organisation's website differed based on how frequently news was accessed in the home during childhood. The Kruskal-Wallis Test result, $H(4) = 15.665$ with a p -value of 0.004, showed that there were statistically significant differences between at least some of the groups.

The mean ranks indicated that individuals from homes where news was accessed more than once a day, daily, or weekly had a mean rank of 2, reflecting relatively high levels of trust in news websites. In contrast, those from homes with monthly or no news access had a mean rank of 3, suggesting slightly lower trust.

Post-hoc comparisons using Dunn's test with Bonferroni adjustment (Table 6.47) revealed that the only significant differences were between the high-frequency groups and the group that never accessed news at home. Specifically, individuals from homes with more than once a day, daily, or weekly access trusted news websites significantly more than those from

homes with no news exposure. No other group comparisons reached statistical significance.

In conclusion, the findings suggested that regular exposure to news in the home during childhood was linked to greater trust in digital news sources. The clearest difference emerged between those who had consistent exposure to news and those who had none, pointing to the lasting influence of early media habits on trust in online journalism.

Table 6.48: Kruskal-Wallis Result: Frequency of news accessed in the home growing up and frequency of news accessed via a News App

Frequency of news accessed in the home growing up	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of frequency of news accessed via a News App
More than once a day	148	3.00
Daily	444	3.00
Weekly	148	3.00
Monthly	38	4.00
Never	22	5.00

Test Statistics:

$H(4) = 22.578, p = < 0.001$

Table 6.49: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Frequency of news accessed in the home growing up and frequency of news accessed via a News App

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
More than once a day - Weekly	0	0.792	No
More than once a day - Daily	0	0.026	Yes
More than once a day - monthly	1	0.019	Yes
More than once a day - Never	2	0.001	Yes
Weekly - Daily	0	1.000	No
Weekly - Monthly	1	0.477	No
Weekly - Never	2	0.031	Yes
Daily - Monthly	1	0.997	No
Daily - Never	2	0.066	No
Monthly - Never	1	1.000	No

A Kruskal-Wallis Test (Table 6.48) examined whether the frequency of accessing news via a news app differed depending on how often news was accessed in the home during childhood. The test result, $H(4) = 22.578$ with $p = < 0.001$, indicated that there were statistically significant differences between at least some of the groups.

The mean ranks showed that individuals from homes where news was accessed more than once a day, daily, or weekly had a mean rank of 3, suggesting relatively frequent use of news apps. Those from homes with monthly access had a mean rank of 4, and those from homes where news was never accessed had a mean rank of 5, indicating less frequent use.

A Post-hoc comparisons using Dunn's test with Bonferroni adjustment (Table 6.49) revealed several significant differences. Individuals from homes with more than once a day access used news apps significantly more often than those from daily, monthly, or never-access homes. Additionally, the weekly group also accessed news apps significantly more than the never group. However, there were no significant differences between the more

than once a day and weekly groups, or among the daily, weekly, and monthly groups.

The findings suggested that growing up in a home with frequent news exposure was associated with more regular use of news apps. The most notable differences were between those with high exposure and those with little or no exposure, reinforcing the idea that early news habits may influence how individuals engage with digital news platforms later in life.

Table 6.50: Kruskal-Wallis Test Results: Frequency of news accessed in the home growing up and level of trust in news accessed via a News App

Frequency of news accessed in the home growing up	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of level of trust in news accessed via a News App
More than once a day	148	2.00
Daily	444	3.00
Weekly	148	3.00
Monthly	38	5.00
Never	22	6.00

Test Statistics:

$H(4) = 30.553, p = < 0.001$

Table 6.51: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Frequency of news accessed in the home growing up and level of trust in news accessed via a News App

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
More than once a day - Weekly	1	0.224	No
More than once a day - Daily	1	0.002	Yes
More than once a day - monthly	3	0.001	Yes
More than once a day - Never	4	0.000	Yes
Weekly - Daily	0	1.000	No
Weekly - Monthly	2	0.114	No
Weekly - Never	3	0.034	Yes
Daily - Monthly	2	0.286	No
Daily - Never	3	0.081	No
Monthly - Never	1	1.000	No

A Kruskal-Wallis Test (Table 6.50) looked at whether trust in news accessed through a News App differed depending on how often news was accessed in the home during childhood. The result, $H(4) = 30.553$ with $p = < 0.001$, showed that there were statistically significant differences between at least some of the groups.

The mean ranks revealed a clear trend: individuals from homes where news was accessed more than once a day had the highest trust in news apps, with a mean rank of 2. Those from daily and weekly news households had a mean rank of 3, while those from monthly and never-access homes had mean ranks of 5 and 6, indicating lower levels of trust.

Post-hoc comparisons using Dunn's test with Bonferroni adjustment (Table 6.51) showed that individuals from homes with more than once a day access trusted news apps significantly more than those from daily, monthly, and never-access homes. The weekly group also showed significantly higher trust than the never group. However, there were no significant differences

between the daily, weekly, and monthly groups, nor between monthly and never groups.

Overall, the findings suggested that frequent exposure to news in the home during childhood was linked to greater trust in news apps. The most notable differences were between those with very frequent exposure and those with little or none, pointing to the lasting influence of early news habits on trust in digital news platforms.

6.4.2 Influence of parental TV news engagement

Following on from the overall news consumption in the home growing up, the decision was made to be more specific and explore if parental engagement with certain platforms would influence post-millennial engagement and trust in news. Four Kruskal-Wallis Tests (See B2 Appendix) were conducted to identify: if the frequency of parental TV news engagement played any significance in the frequency of which post-millennials were engaging with TV news before the first UK lockdown; the trust they placed on TV news before the first UK lockdown; the trust post-millennials had on the overall news they accessed before lockdown; if their trust in news had changed following the first UK lockdown. The tests were conducted on five groupings which were a measurement of the frequency parents/guardians engaged with TV news: More than once a day; Daily; Weekly; Monthly; Never. Of the four tests conducted, three reported statistical significance (See B.9).

Table 6.52: Kruskal-Wallis Test Results: Frequency on TV news accessed in the home growing up and frequency of TV news Accessed as young adults

Frequency of TV news accessed in the home growing up	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of frequency of TV news accessed
More than once a day	157	3.00
Daily	452	3.00
Weekly	137	4.00
Monthly	29	4.00
Never	25	5.00

Test Statistics:

$H(4) = 63.083, p = < 0.001$

Table 6.53: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Frequency on TV news accessed in the home growing up and frequency of TV news accessed as young adults

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
More than once a day - Daily	0	0.001	Yes
More than once a Day - Weekly	1	0.000	Yes
More than once a day - Monthly	1	0.001	Yes
More than once a day - Never	2	0.000	Yes
Daily - Weekly	1	0.009	Yes
Daily - Monthly	1	0.191	No
Daily - Never	2	0.000	Yes
Weekly - Monthly	0	1.000	No
Weekly - Never	1	0.034	Yes
Monthly - Never	1	0.606	No

This analysis (Table 6.52) reflects how early exposure to TV news in the household related to individuals' own frequency of watching TV news as young adults. The Kruskal-Wallis test result, $H(4) = 63.083$ with $p = < 0.001$, indicated that there were statistically significant differences in TV news viewing frequency among the groups based on how often TV news was accessed in their home during childhood.

The mean ranks showed a clear pattern: individuals from homes where TV news was accessed more than once a day or daily had a mean rank of 3, suggesting they watched TV news more frequently themselves. Those from homes where TV news was accessed weekly or monthly had a mean rank of 4, and those from homes where it was never accessed had a mean rank of 5, indicating the least frequent viewing.

Post-hoc comparisons using Dunn's test with Bonferroni adjustment (Table 6.53) revealed that individuals from homes with more than once a day access watched TV news significantly more often than all other groups. The

daily group also watched significantly more than the weekly and never groups, though not significantly more than the monthly group. Additionally, the weekly group watched significantly more than the never group, but not more than the monthly group.

In summary, the findings suggested that the more frequently TV news was accessed in the home during childhood, the more likely individuals were to watch TV news themselves. This supports the idea that early exposure to TV news may help establish long-term viewing habits.

Building on the previous analysis, which showed that individuals who grew up in homes where TV news was accessed more frequently were more likely to watch TV news themselves, the following analysis explored whether those early habits also influenced levels of trust in TV news.

Table 6.54: Kruskal-Wallis Test Result: Frequency of TV news accessed in the home growing up and the level of trust in TV news accessed as young adults

Frequency of TV news accessed in the home growing up	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of level of trust in TV news accessed
More than once a day	157	2.00
Daily	452	2.00
Weekly	137	2.00
Monthly	29	3.00
Never	25	6.00

Test Statistics:

$H(4) = 30.553, p = < 0.001$

Table 6.55: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Frequency of TV news accessed in the home growing up and the level of trust in TV news accessed as young adults

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
More than once a day - Daily	0	0.199	No
More than once a day - Weekly	0	0.023	Yes
More than once a day - Monthly	1	0.056	No
More than once a day - Never	4	0.000	Yes
Daily - Weekly	0	1.000	No
Daily - Monthly	1	0.724	No
Daily - Never	4	0.000	Yes
Weekly - Monthly	1	1.000	No
Weekly - Never	4	0.000	Yes
Monthly - Never	3	0.081	No

The Kruskal-Wallis test (Table 6.54) was used to assess differences in trust based on how often TV news was accessed in the home during childhood. The result, $H(4) = 30.553$ with $p = < 0.001$, confirmed that there were statistically significant differences in trust levels between the groups.

Mean ranks revealed that individuals from homes where TV news was accessed more than once a day, daily, or weekly all reported high levels of trust, with a mean rank of 2. Those from homes with monthly access had a slightly lower trust level (mean rank of 3), while those from homes where TV news was never accessed had the lowest trust, with a mean rank of 6.

Post-hoc comparisons using Dunn's test with Bonferroni adjustment (Table 6.55) showed that individuals from homes with more than once a day access trusted TV news significantly more than those from weekly and never-access homes. The daily group also trusted TV news significantly more than the never group, and the same was true for the weekly group. However, there were no significant differences between the more frequent exposure groups

(more than once a day, daily, and weekly), nor between the monthly and never groups.

Together with the previous findings on viewing frequency, this analysis suggested that early exposure to TV news not only shaped how often individuals engaged with it later in life but also influenced how much they trusted it. The strongest contrasts were between those with consistent exposure and those with none, reinforcing the idea that early media environments can have a lasting impact on both behaviour and attitudes toward news.

Table 6.56: Kruskal-Wallis Test Result: Frequency of TV news accessed in the home growing up and level of trust in news before the first UK Lockdown

Frequency of TV news accessed in the home growing up	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of level of trust in news accessed before first UK lockdown
More than once a day	157	2.00
Daily	452	2.00
Weekly	137	2.00
Monthly	29	3.00
Never	25	3.00

Test Statistics:

$H(4) = 10.341, p = 0.035$

Table 6.57: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Frequency of TV news accessed in the home growing up and level of trust in news before the first UK Lockdown

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
More than once a day - Weekly	0	1.000	No
More than once a day - Daily	0	0.336	No
More than once a day - Monthly	1	0.194	No
More than once a day - Never	1	0.192	No
Weekly - Daily	0	1.000	No
Weekly - Monthly	1	1.000	No
Weekly - Never	1	1.000	No
Daily - Monthly	1	1.000	No
Daily - Never	1	1.000	No
Monthly - Never	0	1.000	No

This analysis (Table 6.56) examined whether trust in overall news accessed before the first UK lockdown varied depending on how frequently TV news was accessed in the home during childhood. The Kruskal-Wallis Test result, $H(4) = 10.341$ with a p -value of 0.035, indicated a statistically significant difference between at least some of the groups.

The mean ranks showed that individuals from homes where TV news was accessed more than once a day, daily, or weekly all had a mean rank of 2, suggesting relatively high levels of trust in news accessed before the lockdown. Those from homes with monthly or no TV news access had a mean rank of 3, indicating slightly lower trust.

However, the post-hoc comparisons using Dunn's test with Bonferroni adjustment (Table 6.57) revealed that none of the pairwise differences between groups were statistically significant. All adjusted p -values were above the 0.05 threshold, meaning that although the overall test suggested some variation, no specific group comparison showed a meaningful difference after correcting for multiple comparisons.

When considered alongside earlier findings (where frequent exposure to TV news in the home was clearly linked to both higher trust in TV news and more frequent viewing), the results here suggest a more limited influence of early TV news exposure on trust in news during a specific event like the first UK lockdown. While there was a slight trend indicating that those with more frequent early exposure tended to trust news more during the lockdown, the differences were not strong or consistent enough to be statistically significant.

In summary, early exposure to TV news appeared to have a stronger and more consistent impact on general trust and viewing habits than on trust in news during a specific crisis.

6.4.3 Influence of parental radio news engagement

Four Kruskal-Wallis Tests were conducted to identify if it was likely that the frequency of parental radio news engagement played a role in: the frequency of which post-millennials were engaging with radio news before the first UK lockdown; the trust they placed in radio news before the first UK lockdown; the level of trust 'Gen Z' had on the overall news they accessed before lockdown; if their level of trust in news had changed following the first UK lockdown.

Although radio news has declined in popularity in recent years (Jigsaw Research, 2022; Ofcom, 2020, 2019a), the results of the survey have demonstrated that there is still some engagement (See Section 5.2.1) from post-millennials, even if it is not the most popular of choices. As a result, it is therefore important to assess why some may still be engaging with this platform despite its steady decline in popularity. The Kruskal-Wallis Tests were conducted on five groupings of the frequency of parental engagement with radio news: More than once a day; Daily; Weekly; Monthly; Never.

Table 6.58: Kruskal-Wallis Test Results: Frequency of parental radio news consumption and frequency of news accessed by 'Gen Z'

Frequency of parental radio news consumption	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of frequency of news accessed via radio
More than once a day	60	3.5
Daily	266	4
Weekly	177	5
Monthly	72	5
Never	225	5

Test Statistics:

$H(4) = 161.035, p = < 0.001$

Table 6.59: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Frequency of parental radio news consumption and frequency of radio news accessed by 'Gen Z'

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
More than once a day - Daily	0.5	1.000	No
More than once a day - Weekly	1.5	0.008	Yes
More than once a day - Monthly	1.5	0.000	Yes
More than once a day - Never	1.5	0.000	Yes
Daily - Weekly	1	0.017	Yes
Daily - Monthly	1	0.000	Yes
Daily - Never	1	0.000	Yes
Weekly - Monthly	0	0.013	Yes
Weekly - Never	0	0.000	Yes
Monthly - Never	0	0.490	No

The Kruskal-Wallis test result ($H = 161.035, p = < 0.001$) showed a statistically significant difference in how frequently respondents consumed radio news, depending on how often their parents consumed radio news (Table 6.58). This indicated that parental patterns of radio news

consumption were meaningfully associated with the radio news habits of the respondents.

The data showed that respondents whose parents listened to radio news more than once a day had the lowest mean rank (3.5), followed by those whose parents listened daily (4). Respondents whose parents listened weekly, monthly, or never all had a higher mean rank of 5. Since lower ranks reflected more frequent radio news consumption, this suggested that respondents were more likely to consume radio news frequently if their parents did so as well.

Post-hoc comparisons using Dunn's test with Bonferroni adjustment (Table 6.59) revealed no significant difference between the "more than once a day" and "daily" parental groups, indicating similar levels of radio news consumption among their children. However, both of these groups differed significantly from the "weekly", "monthly", and "never" groups. This supported the idea that frequent parental radio news consumption was associated with higher levels of radio news use among respondents.

Although "weekly" and "monthly" parental groups had the same mean rank, they still differed significantly from each other, as did weekly and "never". However, "monthly" and "never" were not significantly different, suggesting that infrequent or no parental radio use corresponded to similarly low levels of radio news consumption among respondents.

In summary, the analysis showed a strong association between how often parents consumed radio news and how frequently their children did, with more frequent parental radio use linked to greater engagement with radio news among respondents.

Table 6.60: Kruskal-Wallis Test Results: Frequency of parental radio news consumption and level of trust in news accessed via radio

Frequency of parental radio news consumption	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of level of trust in news accessed via radio
More than once a day	60	2
Daily	266	3
Weekly	177	3
Monthly	72	6
Never	225	6

Test Statistics:

$$H(4) = 147.151, p = < 0.001$$

Table 6.61: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Frequency of parental radio news consumption and level of trust in news accessed via radio

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
More than once a day - Daily	1	1.000	No
More than once a day - Weekly	1	0.015	Yes
More than once a day - Monthly	4	0.000	Yes
More than once a day - Never	4	0.000	Yes
Daily - Weekly	0	0.020	Yes
Daily - Monthly	3	0.000	Yes
Daily - Never	3	0.000	Yes
Weekly - Monthly	3	0.754	No
Weekly - Never	3	0.000	Yes
Monthly - Never	0	0.008	Yes

The Kruskal-Wallis test ($H = 147.151, p = < 0.001$) revealed a statistically significant difference in respondents' trust in radio news based on how frequently their parents consumed it (Table 6.60). This suggested that parental listening habits were not only linked to behaviour but also to attitudes toward radio news.

Respondents whose parents listened to radio news more than once a day had the lowest mean rank (2), indicating the highest level of trust, as 1 represented “extremely trusting.” Those whose parents listened daily or weekly had a slightly higher mean rank (3), while those whose parents listened monthly or “never” had the highest mean rank (6), reflecting the lowest levels of trust.

Dunn’s post-hoc test with Bonferroni adjustment (Table 6.61) showed no significant difference between the “more than once a day” and “daily” groups, suggesting similar levels of trust among these respondents. However, the “more than once a day” group differed significantly from the weekly, monthly, and “never” groups, indicating that very frequent parental radio use was associated with significantly higher trust in radio news. The “daily” group also differed significantly from the weekly, monthly, and “never” groups, reinforcing this trend.

Although the weekly and monthly groups shared the same mean rank, they were not significantly different, while the weekly and “never” groups were. Interestingly, the monthly and “never” groups, despite also sharing the same mean rank, were significantly different, pointing to subtle distinctions in trust even among those with low parental exposure.

Together, these results suggested that parental media habits influenced not only how often respondents engaged with radio news, but also how much they trusted it. The consistency across both behavioural and attitudinal measures highlighted the potential long-term impact of parental media consumption on the next generation’s relationship with news.

6.4.4 Influence of parental print news engagement

Four Kruskal-Wallis Tests were conducted to identify if the frequency of parental print news engagement was likely to influence: the frequency of which post-millennials were engaging with print news before the first UK lockdown; the trust they have in print news before the first UK lockdown; the trust ‘Gen Z’ had on the overall news they accessed before lockdown; if their

levels of trust had changed following the first UK lockdown. The tests were conducted on five groupings according to the frequency parents engaged with print journalism: More than once a day; Daily; Weekly; Monthly; Never.

Table 6.62: Kruskal-Wallis Test Results: Frequency of parental print news consumption and frequency of print news consumption by 'Gen Z'

Frequency of parental print news consumption	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of frequency of news accessed via print
More than once a day	15	4
Daily	166	5
Weekly	240	5
Monthly	77	5
Never	302	5

Test Statistics:

$H(4) = 95.447, p = < 0.001$

Table 6.63: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Frequency of parental print news consumption and frequency of print news consumption by 'Gen Z'

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
More than once a day - Daily	1	1.000	No
More than once a day - Weekly	1	0.186	No
More than once a day - Monthly	1	0.044	Yes
More than once a day - Never	1	0.000	Yes
Daily - Weekly	0	0.001	Yes
Daily - Monthly	0	0.000	Yes
Daily - Never	0	0.000	Yes
Weekly - Monthly	0	1.000	No
Weekly - Never	0	0.000	Yes
Monthly - Never	0	0.212	No

The Kruskal-Wallis test ($H = 95.447, p = < 0.001$) revealed a statistically significant difference in how frequently respondents accessed print news,

depending on how often their parents consumed print news (Table 6.62). This suggested that parental habits around print media were associated with the frequency of print news use among respondents.

Respondents whose parents read print news “more than once a day” had the lowest mean rank (4), indicating the highest frequency of print news access. All other groups (daily, weekly, monthly, and never) had a mean rank of 5, suggesting lower and relatively similar levels of engagement with print news.

Post-hoc comparisons using Dunn’s test with Bonferroni adjustment (Table 6.63) showed that the “more than once a day” group differed significantly only from the “monthly” and “never” groups, but not from the “daily” or “weekly” groups. This indicated that very frequent parental print news consumption was associated with higher print news use among respondents, but the effect was more pronounced when compared to those with little or no parental exposure.

The “daily” group differed significantly from the weekly, monthly, and “never” groups, reinforcing the trend that more frequent parental print news consumption was linked to greater engagement. However, no significant difference was found between the “weekly” and “monthly” groups, or between “monthly” and “never”, suggesting that lower levels of parental print news use were associated with similarly low levels of print news access among respondents.

These findings aligned with earlier results on radio news, where frequent parental media use was linked to both higher engagement and greater trust in news among respondents. Together, the data suggested that parental media habits—whether through radio or print—played a consistent role in shaping how often respondents accessed news.

Table 6.64: Kruskal-Wallis Test Results: Frequency of parental print news consumption and level of trust in print news accessed

Frequency of parental Print News consumption	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of level of trust in news accessed via print
More than once a day	15	4
Daily	166	4
Weekly	240	6
Monthly	77	6
Never	302	6

Test Statistics:

$H(4) = 60.359, p = < 0.001$

Table 6.65: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Frequency of parental print news consumption and level of trust in print news accessed

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
More than once a day - Daily	0	1.000	No
More than once a day - Weekly	2	1.000	No
More than once a day - Monthly	2	1.000	No
More than once a day - Never	2	0.043	Yes
Daily - Weekly	2	0.087	No
Daily - Monthly	2	0.093	No
Daily - Never	2	0.000	Yes
Weekly - Monthly	0	1.000	No
Weekly - Never	0	0.000	Yes
Monthly - Never	0	0.081	No

The Kruskal-Wallis test ($H = 60.359, p = < 0.001$) indicated a statistically significant difference in respondents' trust in print news based on how frequently their parents engaged with it (Table 6.64). This suggested that parental habits around print media were linked to how much trust respondents placed in print news sources.

Respondents whose parents read print news “more than once a day” or daily had the lowest mean rank (4), reflecting higher levels of trust. In contrast, those whose parents read print news weekly, monthly, or “never” had a higher mean rank (6), indicating lower levels of trust.

Post-hoc comparisons using Dunn’s test with Bonferroni adjustment showed no significant difference between the “more than once a day” and “daily” groups, nor between these and the weekly or monthly groups (Table 6.65). However, both the “more than once a day” and “daily” groups differed significantly from the “never” group. This suggested that respondents with parents who never consumed print news were notably less trusting of it compared to those whose parents read it frequently.

There were no significant differences between the weekly, monthly, and “never” groups, indicating that lower levels of parental print news consumption were associated with similarly low levels of trust among respondents.

These results complemented earlier findings, which showed that frequent parental media use was linked to both higher engagement and greater trust in news. Together, the data suggested that parental media habits influenced not only how often respondents accessed news but also how credible they perceived it to be.

Table 6.66: Kruskal-Wallis Test Results: Frequency of parental print news consumption and comparison of news after the first UK Lockdown

Frequency of parental Print News consumption	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of comparison of trust in News following first UK Lockdown
More than once a day	15	1
Daily	166	2
Weekly	240	2
Monthly	77	1
Never	302	2

Test Statistics:

$H(4) = 20.487, p = < 0.001$

Table 6.67: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Frequency of parental print news consumption and comparison of news after the first UK Lockdown

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
Monthly - More than once a day	0	1.000	No
Monthly - Never	1	0.001	Yes
Monthly - weekly	1	0.001	Yes
Monthly - Daily	1	0.000	Yes
More than once a day - Never	1	1.000	No
More than once a day - Weekly	1	1.000	No
More than once a day - Daily	1	1.000	No
Never - Weekly	0	1.000	No
Never - Daily	0	1.000	No
Weekly - Daily	0	1.000	No

The Kruskal-Wallis test ($H = 20.487, p = < 0.001$) indicated a statistically significant difference in how respondents perceived changes in their trust in news following the first UK lockdown, based on the frequency of their parents' print news consumption (Table 6.66). This suggested that parental

print news habits were associated with how respondents evaluated shifts in their trust during that period.

Respondents whose parents read print news “more than once a day” or monthly had a mean rank of 1, indicating they felt less trust in news after the lockdown. In contrast, those whose parents read print news daily, weekly, or “never” had a mean rank of 2, suggesting their trust remained about the same.

Post-hoc comparisons using Dunn’s test with Bonferroni adjustment (Table 6.67) showed that the “monthly” group differed significantly from the “never,” “weekly,” and “daily” groups. This indicated that respondents with parents who read print news monthly were more likely to report a decrease in trust compared to those whose parents consumed print news more regularly or not at all. However, there were no significant differences between the “more than once a day” group and any other group, nor among the “never,” “weekly,” and “daily” groups, suggesting similar perceptions of trust change among these respondents.

The results showed that respondents with parents who consumed print news monthly were more likely to report a decline in trust in news following the first UK lockdown, while those with parents who consumed print news more frequently or not at all tended to report no change.

Table 6.68: Kruskal-Wallis Test Results: Frequency of parental print news consumption and level of trust before first UK Lockdown

Frequency of parental Print News consumption	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of level of trust in News before first UK Lockdown
More than once a day	15	2
Daily	166	2
Weekly	240	2
Monthly	77	2
Never	302	2

Test Statistics:

$$H(4) = 12.572, p = 0.014$$

Table 6.69: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Frequency of parental print news consumption and level of trust before first UK Lockdown

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
Daily - More than once a day	0	1.000	No
Daily - Weekly	0	1.000	No
Daily - Monthly	0	1.000	No
Daily - Never	0	0.010	Yes
More than once a day - Weekly	0	1.000	No
More than once a day - Monthly	0	1.000	No
More than once a day - Never	0	1.000	No
Weekly - Monthly	0	1.000	No
Weekly - Never	0	0.188	No
Monthly - Never	0	1.000	No

The Kruskal-Wallis test ($H = 12.572, p = 0.014$) indicated a statistically significant difference in respondents' level of trust in news before the first UK lockdown, based on how frequently their parents consumed print news (Table 6.68). Although the overall difference was statistically significant, the

mean ranks across all groups were the same (2), suggesting that any differences were subtle.

Post-hoc comparisons using Dunn's test with Bonferroni adjustment (Table 6.69) revealed that the only significant difference was between the "daily" and "never" groups. Respondents whose parents read print news daily were significantly more trusting of news before the lockdown compared to those whose parents never consumed print news. No other group comparisons showed significant differences.

To surmise, while most respondents reported similar levels of trust in news before the first UK lockdown regardless of parental print news habits, those with parents who read print news daily stood out as being significantly more trusting than those with no parental exposure to print news.

6.4.5 Influence of parental engagement with news organisation's website

Four Kruskal-Wallis Tests were conducted to identify if there was likely to be significance between the frequency of parental engagement with news acquired from a news organisation's website and news consumption and trust (See B.7). The tests were conducted on five groupings of the frequency parents consumed news through a news organisation's website: More than once a day; Daily; Weekly; Monthly; Never.

Table 6.70: Kruskal-Wallis Test Results: Frequency of news accessed via a news organisation's website by parents and frequency of news accessed via a news organisation's website by 'Gen Z'

Frequency of news accessed via a news organisation's website by parents	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of frequency of news accessed via news organisation's website
More than once a day	23	2
Daily	168	3
Weekly	177	3
Monthly	90	3
Never	342	3

Test Statistics:

$H(4) = 55.168, p = < 0.001$

Table 6.71: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Frequency of news accessed via a news organisation's website by parents and frequency of news accessed via a news organisation's website by 'Gen Z'

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
More than once a day - Daily	1	0.392	No
More than once a day - Weekly	1	0.175	No
More than once a day - Monthly	1	0.007	Yes
More than once a day - Never	1	0.000	Yes
Daily - Weekly	0	1.000	No
Daily - Monthly	0	0.107	No
Daily - Never	0	0.000	Yes
Weekly - Monthly	0	0.407	No
Weekly - Never	0	0.000	Yes
Monthly - Never	0	0.964	No

The Kruskal-Wallis test ($H = 55.168$, $p < 0.001$) revealed a statistically significant difference in how frequently respondents accessed news via a news organisation's website, depending on how often their parents did so (Table 6.70). This indicated that parental habits in accessing digital news were associated with respondents' own use of news websites.

Respondents whose parents accessed news websites "more than once a day" had the lowest mean rank (2), suggesting they themselves accessed news online more frequently. All other groups (daily, weekly, monthly, and never), had a mean rank of 3, indicating less frequent use.

Post-hoc comparisons using Dunn's test with Bonferroni adjustment (Table 6.71) showed that the "more than once a day" group differed significantly from the "monthly" and "never" groups, but not from the "daily" or "weekly" groups. This suggested that very frequent parental use of news websites was associated with significantly higher engagement among respondents, particularly when compared to those with little or no parental exposure.

Additionally, the "daily" group differed significantly from the "never" group, and the "weekly" group also differed significantly from the "never" group. These findings indicated that even moderate parental engagement with news websites was linked to more frequent use among respondents, compared to those whose parents never accessed such platforms.

The results illustrate a clear association between parental use of news organisation websites and respondents' own digital news habits, with more frequent parental use linked to higher levels of engagement.

Table 6.72: Kruskal-Wallis Test Results: Frequency of news accessed via a news organisation's website by parents and level of trust in news accessed via a news organisation's website

Frequency of news accessed via a news organisation's website by parents	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of level of trust in news accessed via a news organisation's website
More than once a day	23	2
Daily	168	2
Weekly	177	2
Monthly	90	2
Never	342	2

Test Statistics:

$H(4) = 14.493, p = 0.006$

Table 6.73: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Frequency of news accessed via a news organisation's website by parents and level of trust in news accessed via a news organisation's website

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
Daily - Monthly	0	1.000	No
Daily - More than once a day	0	1.000	No
Daily - Weekly	0	1.000	No
Daily - Never	0	0.011	Yes
Monthly - More than once a day	0	1.000	No
Monthly - Weekly	0	1.000	No
Monthly - Never	0	0.093	No
More than once a day - Weekly	0	1.000	No
More than once a day - Never	0	1.000	No
Weekly - Never	0	1.000	No

The Kruskal-Wallis test ($H = 14.493$, $p = 0.006$) identified a statistically significant difference in how much respondents trusted news accessed via a news organisation's website, depending on how frequently their parents used such websites (Table 6.72). This finding suggested a link between parental digital news habits and respondents' trust in online news.

Despite this overall significance, the mean rank for all groups was the same (2), indicating that most respondents reported similarly high levels of trust, as 1 represented "extremely trusting." This implies that, in general, trust in online news was consistently strong across the sample.

The post-hoc analysis using Dunn's test with Bonferroni adjustment (Table 6.74) revealed only one significant difference: between the "daily" and "never" groups. Respondents whose parents accessed news websites daily were significantly more trusting of online news than those whose parents never did. All other group comparisons showed no significant differences, suggesting that trust levels were broadly similar regardless of parental usage frequency.

While trust in news from news organisations' websites was generally high across all groups, respondents with parents who accessed such sites daily expressed significantly greater trust than those with no parental exposure to online news.

6.4.6 Influence of parental engagement with news from other websites

Kruskal-Wallis Tests were conducted to identify if any significance was likely between the frequency of parental engagement with news acquired from other websites such as blogs and the frequency of which post-millennials were engaging with news from other websites before the first UK lockdown; the trust post-millennials placed on the news accessed via other websites before the first UK lockdown; the trust 'Gen Z' had on the overall news they accessed before lockdown; if their trust in news had changed following the first UK lockdown. The tests were conducted on five groupings of frequency of parental engagement with other websites: More than once a day; Daily; Weekly; Monthly; Never.

Table 6.74: Kruskal-Wallis Test Results: Frequency of news accessed via other website by parents and frequency of news accessed via other websites by 'Gen Z'

Frequency of news accessed via other websites website by parents	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of frequency news accessed via other websites
More than once a day	13	3
Daily	65	3
Weekly	76	4
Monthly	65	3
Never	581	5

Test Statistics:

$H(4) = 117.386, p = < 0.001$

Table 6.75: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Frequency of news accessed via other website by parents and frequency of news accessed via other websites by 'Gen Z'

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
More than once a day - Daily	0	1.000	No
More than once a day - Weekly	1	1.000	No
More than once a day - Monthly	0	0.534	No
More than once a day - Never	2	0.000	Yes
Daily - Monthly	0	0.730	No
Daily - Weekly	1	0.109	No
Daily - Never	2	0.000	Yes
Monthly - Weekly	1	1.000	No
Monthly - Never	2	0.000	Yes
Weekly - Never	1	0.000	Yes

The Kruskal-Wallis test ($H = 117.386, p = < 0.001$) indicated a statistically significant difference in how often respondents accessed news through other websites, depending on their parents' use of such sources (Table 6.74). This

suggested that parental engagement with alternative online news platforms was linked to how frequently their children used them.

Respondents whose parents accessed news from other websites more than once a day, daily, or monthly had a mean rank of 3, while those with weekly parental use had a slightly higher mean rank of 4. The highest mean rank (5) was observed among respondents whose parents never used these websites, indicating they were the least likely to access news from such sources themselves.

Post-hoc comparisons using Dunn's test with Bonferroni adjustment (Table 6.75) showed that all groups with any level of parental use, whether frequent or occasional, differed significantly from the "never" group. However, there were no significant differences among the groups with parental exposure. This suggested that any parental use of alternative news websites, regardless of frequency, was associated with greater use among respondents compared to those with no parental exposure.

In summary, the findings showed a clear pattern: respondents were more likely to access news from other websites if their parents did, with the strongest contrast between those with some parental exposure and those with none.

Table 6.76: Kruskal-Wallis Test Results: Frequency of news accessed via other website by parents and level of trust in news accessed via other websites

Frequency of news accessed via other websites website by parents	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of level of trust in news accessed via other websites
More than once a day	13	2
Daily	65	3
Weekly	76	3
Monthly	65	3
Never	581	5

Test Statistics:

$H(4) = 94.083, p = < 0.001$

Table 6.77: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Frequency of news accessed via other website by parents and level of trust in news accessed via other websites

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
More than once a day - Daily	1	1.000	No
More than once a day - Monthly	1	1.000	No
More than once a day - Weekly	1	1.000	No
More than once a day - Never	3	0.004	Yes
Daily - Monthly	0	0.734	No
Daily - Weekly	0	0.052	No
Daily - Never	2	0.000	Yes
Monthly - Weekly	0	1.000	No
Monthly - Never	2	0.000	Yes
Weekly - Never	2	0.000	Yes

The Kruskal-Wallis test ($H = 94.083$, $p = < 0.001$) revealed a statistically significant difference in how much respondents trusted news accessed via other websites, depending on how frequently their parents used such sources (Table 6.76). This indicated that parental habits in using alternative online news platforms were associated with respondents' trust in those platforms.

Respondents whose parents accessed news from other websites more than once a day had the lowest mean rank (2), indicating the highest level of trust. Those whose parents accessed such sites daily, weekly, or monthly had a mean rank of 3, while those whose parents never used these websites had the highest mean rank (5), reflecting the lowest level of trust.

Post-hoc comparisons using Dunn's test with Bonferroni adjustment showed that the "more than once a day," "daily," "weekly," and "monthly" groups all differed significantly from the "never" group (Table 6.77). However, there were no significant differences among the groups with any level of parental

exposure. This suggested that any parental use of alternative news websites, regardless of frequency, was associated with greater trust among respondents, compared to those with no parental exposure.

Overall, the results showed a clear pattern: respondents were more likely to trust news from other websites if their parents also used these sources, with the strongest contrast between those with some parental exposure and those with none.

6.4.7 Influence of parental engagement with news on social media

In 2019, almost half of the world's population had a social media account (Battisby, 2019). This number has continued to grow with an ongoing projectory in numbers predicted (Dixon, 2023). At the time of writing this thesis, more and more people are using social media to access news (Ahmed and Gil-Lopez, 2022; Anspach, 2017; Bridgman *et al.*, 2020; Bruns, 2017; Ofcom, 2019b).

Reports have suggested that it is a popular source of news for post-millennials (Jigsaw Research, 2022) and this is further supported by the findings of the survey with Twitter listed as their third most popular platform for acquiring trustworthy news content (Section 5.3.1 and Section 5.4.3). Although social media is still relatively new in comparison to more traditional news platforms, its popularity is gaining across generations.

As a result, four Kruskal-Wallis Tests were conducted to identify if the frequency of parental engagement with news acquired from social media, played any significance in: the frequency of which post-millennials were accessing news via social media before the first UK lockdown; the trust post-millennials placed on the news accessed via social media before the first UK lockdown; the trust 'Gen Z' had in the overall news they accessed before lockdown and if their trust had changed following the first UK lockdown. The tests were conducted on five groupings: More than once a day; Daily; Weekly; Monthly; Never.

Table 6.78: Kruskal-Wallis Test Results: Frequency of news accessed via social media by parents and frequency of news accessed via social media by 'Gen Z'

Frequency of news accessed via other social media by parents	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of frequency of news accessed via social media
More than once a day	25	2
Daily	103	2
Weekly	117	2
Monthly	77	2
Never	478	2

Test Statistics:

$H(4) = 21.144, p = < 0.001$

Table 6.79: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Frequency of news accessed via social media by parents and frequency of news accessed via social media by 'Gen Z'

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
More than once a day - Daily	0	1.000	No
More than once a day - Weekly	0	0.301	No
More than once a day - Monthly	0	0.290	No
More than once a day - Never	0	0.025	Yes
Daily - Weekly	0	0.556	No
Daily - Monthly	0	0.601	No
Daily - Never	0	0.002	Yes
Weekly - Monthly	0	1.000	No
Weekly - never	0	1.000	No
Monthly - Never	0	1.000	No

The Kruskal-Wallis test ($H = 21.144, p = < 0.001$) showed a statistically significant difference in how often respondents accessed news via social media, depending on how frequently their parents used social media for news (Table 6.78). This indicated a relationship between parental social media news habits and respondents' own use of these platforms for news.

Despite this significance, all groups shared the same mean rank (2), suggesting that, in practice, most respondents accessed news through social media at similar rates, regardless of their parents' behaviour. This points to only subtle differences in usage patterns.

Post-hoc comparisons using Dunn's test with Bonferroni adjustment (Table 6.79) revealed that the only significant differences were between the "more than once a day" and "never" groups, and between the "daily" and "never" groups. These results suggested that respondents whose parents never used social media for news were less likely to use it themselves, compared to those whose parents accessed it frequently. No other group comparisons reached statistical significance.

In conclusion, overall social media news use was consistent across groups, respondents with parents who never used social media for news were notably less engaged, indicating a modest influence of parental behaviour on respondents' habits.

Table 6.80: Kruskal-Wallis Test Results: Frequency of news accessed via social media by parents and level of trust in news accessed via social media

Frequency of news accessed via other social media by parents	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of level of trust in news accessed via social media
More than once a day	25	2
Daily	103	3
Weekly	117	3
Monthly	77	3
Never	478	3

Test Statistics:

$H(4) = 11.597, p = 0.021$

Table 6.81: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Frequency of news accessed via social media by parents and level of trust in news accessed via social media

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
More than once a day - Monthly	1	1.000	No
More than once a day - Daily	1	0.643	No
More than once a day - Weekly	1	0.552	No
More than once a day - Never	1	0.050	No
Monthly - Daily	0	1.000	No
Monthly - Weekly	0	1.000	No
Monthly - Never	0	1.000	No
Daily - Weekly	0	1.000	No
Daily - Never	0	1.000	No
Weekly - Never	0	1.000	No

The Kruskal-Wallis test ($H = 11.597$, $p = 0.021$) showed a statistically significant difference in respondents' trust in news accessed via social media, based on how often their parents used social media for news (Table 6.80). This suggested a possible connection between parental behaviour and respondents' attitudes toward the trustworthiness of news on these platforms.

Respondents whose parents accessed social media for news more than once a day had the lowest mean rank (2), indicating slightly higher trust levels. All other groups (daily, weekly, monthly, and never) had a mean rank of 3, reflecting a generally consistent but slightly lower level of trust.

Despite the overall significance, post-hoc comparisons using Dunn's test with Bonferroni adjustment (Table 6.81) revealed no statistically significant differences between any of the groups. Even the comparison between the "more than once a day" and "never" groups, which came closest ($p = 0.050$), did not meet the threshold for significance after adjustment.

While there was a slight trend suggesting that more frequent parental use of social media for news might be linked to greater trust among respondents, the differences were small and not statistically meaningful when examined in detail.

Table 6.82: Kruskal-Wallis Test Results: Frequency of news accessed via social media by parents and comparison of trust in news following first UK Lockdown

Frequency of news accessed via other social media by parents	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of comparison of trust in news following first UK Lockdown
More than once a day	25	1
Daily	103	2
Weekly	117	2
Monthly	77	2
Never	478	2

Test Statistics:

$$H(4) = 14.447, p = 0.006$$

Table 6.83: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Frequency of news accessed via social media by parents and comparison of trust in news following first UK Lockdown

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
More than once a day - Never	1	1.000	No
More than once a day - Weekly	1	0.449	No
More than once a day - Monthly	1	0.527	No
More than once a day - Daily	1	0.038	Yes
Never - Weekly	0	1.000	No
Never - Monthly	0	1.000	No
Never - Daily	0	0.016	Yes
Weekly - Monthly	0	1.000	No
Weekly - Daily	0	1.000	No
Monthly - Daily	0	1.000	No

The Kruskal-Wallis test ($H = 14.447$, $p = 0.006$) revealed a statistically significant difference in how respondents perceived changes in their trust in news following the first UK lockdown, based on how frequently their parents accessed news via social media (Table 6.82). This suggested that parental use of social media for news may have influenced how respondents evaluated shifts in their trust during that period.

Respondents whose parents accessed news via social media more than once a day had a mean rank of 1, indicating they were more likely to report a decrease in trust. All other groups (daily, weekly, monthly, and never) had a mean rank of 2, suggesting that most respondents in these groups felt their trust in news remained about the same after the lockdown.

Post-hoc comparisons using Dunn's test with Bonferroni adjustment (Table 6.83) showed a significant difference between the "more than once a day" and "daily" groups, indicating that respondents with parents who accessed social media news very frequently were more likely to report reduced trust compared to those with parents who accessed it daily. Additionally, the "never" and "daily" groups also differed significantly, suggesting that respondents with no parental exposure to social media news were less likely to report a decrease in trust than those with daily parental exposure. No other group comparisons were statistically significant, indicating that the differences in perceived trust change were limited to specific contrasts.

To conclude, the results suggested that very frequent parental use of social media for news was associated with a greater likelihood of respondents reporting a decline in trust following the first UK lockdown, while those with no or moderate parental exposure were more likely to report stable levels of trust.

6.4.8 Influence parental trust in news ('Gen Z' perception)

Kruskal-Wallis Tests were also conducted to see if there was any significance between the perception that respondents had of their parent/guardian's overall trust in news and the trust 'Gen Z' had overall in news content. There were five groupings altogether in terms of parental

trust: Extremely trusting; Somewhat trusting; Neutral; Not trusting; Extremely not trusting.

Table 6.84: Kruskal-Wallis Test Results: Parental level of trust in news accessed and 'Gen Z' level of trust in TV news

Parental level of trust in news accessed	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of level of trust in TV news
Extremely trusting	268	2
Trusting	344	2
Neutral	134	3
Not trusting	41	3
Extremely not trusting	13	2

Test Statistics:

$$H(4) = 14.576, p = 0.006$$

Table 6.85: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Parental level of trust in news accessed and 'Gen Z' level of trust in TV news

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
Extremely trusting - trusting	0	1.000	No
Extremely trusting - Not trusting	1	0.948	No
Extremely trusting - Neutral	1	0.007	Yes
Extremely trusting - Extremely not trusting	0	1.000	No
Trusting - Not trusting	1	1.000	No
Trusting - Neutral	1	0.050	Yes
Trusting - Extremely not trusting	0	1.000	No
Not trusting - Neutral	0	1.000	No
Not trusting - Extremely not trusting	1	1.000	No
Neutral - Extremely not trusting	1	1.000	No

The Kruskal-Wallis test ($H = 14.576, p = 0.006$) revealed a statistically significant difference in respondents' trust in television news, depending on

their perception of their parents' level of trust in news overall (Table 6.84). This suggests that parental attitudes toward news may be linked to how much trust respondents place in TV news.

Respondents who described their parents as “extremely trusting” or “trusting” had a mean rank of 2, indicating relatively high trust in TV news. Those who viewed their parents as “neutral” or “not trusting” had a higher mean rank of 3, suggesting lower levels of trust. Interestingly, the “extremely not trusting” group also had a mean rank of 2, though the small sample size ($n = 13$) limits the strength of this observation.

Post-hoc comparisons using Dunn's test with Bonferroni adjustment (Table 6.85) showed significant differences between the “extremely trusting” and “neutral” groups, and between the “trusting” and “neutral” groups. These results indicate that respondents who perceived their parents as neutral in their trust of news were significantly less trusting of TV news themselves, compared to those who saw their parents as more trusting. No other group comparisons were statistically significant.

In summary, the findings suggest that higher perceived parental trust in news is associated with greater trust in television news among respondents, while a neutral parental stance may be linked to reduced trust.

Table 6.86: Kruskal-Wallis Test Results: Parental level of trust in news accessed and 'Gen Z' level of trust in news accessed before first UK Lockdown

Parental level of trust in news accessed	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of level of trust in news accessed before first UK Lockdown
Extremely trusting	268	2
Trusting	344	2
Neutral	134	3
Not trusting	41	3
Extremely not trusting	13	4

Test Statistics:

$$H(4) = 56.467, p = < 0.001$$

Table 6.87: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Parental level of trust in news accessed and 'Gen Z' level of trust in news accessed before first UK Lockdown

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
Extremely trusting - Trusting	0	0.001	Yes
Extremely trusting - Not trusting	1	0.002	Yes
Extremely trusting - Neutral	1	0.000	Yes
Extremely trusting - Extremely not trusting	2	0.000	Yes
Trusting - Not trusting	1	0.630	No
Trusting - Neutral	1	0.012	Yes
Trusting - Extremely not trusting	2	0.017	Yes
Not trusting - Neutral	0	1.000	No
Not trusting - Extremely not trusting	1	0.696	No
Neutral - Extremely not trusting	1	0.561	No

The Kruskal-Wallis Test was used to examine whether respondents' perceptions of their parents' general level of trust in news were significantly associated with the respondents' own trust in the news they consumed before the first UK lockdown (Table 6.86). The test revealed a statistically

significant difference, with $H(4) = 56.467$ and a p -value less than 0.001, indicating that perceived parental trust levels were meaningfully related to Generation Zero's own trust in news during that specific time.

Mean ranks showed a clear pattern: respondents who perceived their parents as "extremely trusting" or "trusting" of news had the highest levels of trust themselves, both with a mean rank of 2. These two categories can be grouped as the "high parental trust" group. In contrast, those who perceived their parents as "neutral" or "not trusting" had a mean rank of 3, and those who saw their parents as "extremely not trusting" had the lowest trust, with a mean rank of 4. These three categories form a "low parental trust" group, with a noticeable drop in trust compared to the high parental trust group.

Post-hoc pairwise comparisons using Dunn's test with Bonferroni adjustment (Table 6.87) confirmed that the "extremely trusting" parental group differed significantly from all other groups, including the "trusting" group, despite their similar mean ranks. This suggests that respondents who perceived their parents as extremely trusting of news were particularly likely to trust news themselves. The "trusting" group also showed significantly higher trust than the "neutral" and "extremely not trusting" groups. However, there were no significant differences among the "neutral", "not trusting", and "extremely not trusting" groups, indicating that once perceived parental trust dropped below the "trusting" level, respondents' own trust remained consistently low.

Overall, the findings highlight a distinct divide in Generation Zero's trust in news based on how trusting they perceived their parents to be. Those who saw their parents as generally trusting of news were significantly more likely to trust news themselves before the first lockdown, while those who perceived their parents as less trusting showed similarly low levels of trust.

Table 6.88: Kruskal-Wallis Test Results: Parental level of trust in news accessed and comparison of 'Gen Z' level of trust in news after first UK Lockdown

Parental level of trust in news accessed	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of comparison of trust in news accessed after first UK Lockdown
Extremely trusting	268	2
Trusting	344	2
Neutral	134	2
Not trusting	41	2
Extremely not trusting	13	2

Test Statistics:

$$H(4) = 11.652, p = 0.020$$

Table 6.89: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Parental level of trust in news accessed and comparison of 'Gen Z' level of trust in news after first UK Lockdown

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
Extremely trusting - Not trusting	0	1.000	No
Extremely trusting - Trusting	0	0.066	No
Extremely trusting - Extremely not trusting	0	0.031	Yes
Extremely trusting - Neutral	0	1.000	No
Not trusting - trusting	0	1.000	No
Not trusting - Extremely not trusting	0	1.000	No
Not trusting - Neutral	0	1.000	No
Trusting - Extremely not trusting	0	1.000	No
Trusting - Neutral	0	1.000	No
Extremely not trusting - Neutral	0	1.000	No

This analysis (Table 6.88) explores whether respondents' perceptions of their parents' general level of trust in news are associated with how their own trust in news changed after the first UK lockdown. The response scale

was: 1 = less trust, 2 = same level of trust, and 3 = more trust. The Kruskal-Wallis Test yielded a statistically significant result, $H(4) = 11.652$, $p = 0.020$, suggesting that perceived parental trust levels were related to how Generation Zero evaluated changes in their own trust in news following the lockdown.

Despite the statistical significance of the overall test, the mean ranks for all parental trust groups were the same (mean rank = 2), indicating that, on average, respondents across all groups reported no change in their trust in news after the lockdown. This suggests that while there may be subtle differences between specific groups, the general trend was stability in trust levels.

Post-hoc pairwise comparisons using Dunn's test with Bonferroni adjustment (Table 8.89) revealed only one statistically significant difference: between the "extremely trusting" and "extremely not trusting" parental groups ($p = 0.031$). However, the mean rank difference was 0, which implies that although the test flagged a significant result, the practical difference in trust change between these two groups was negligible. All other comparisons between groups were not statistically significant, with adjusted p-values well above the 0.05 threshold.

In summary, while the Kruskal-Wallis test suggests a statistically significant association between perceived parental trust and changes in respondents' own trust in news after the first lockdown, the actual differences between groups are minimal. Most respondents, regardless of how trusting they perceived their parents to be, reported that their trust in news remained the same after the lockdown.

Table 6.90: Kruskal-Wallis Test Results: Parental level of trust in news accessed and level of trust 'Gen Z' have in news accessed via a news organisation's website

Parental level of trust in news accessed	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of level of trust in news accessed via a news organisation's website
Extremely trusting	268	2
Trusting	344	2
Neutral	134	3
Not trusting	41	3
Extremely not trusting	13	3

Test Statistics:

$$H(4) = 48.446, p = < 0.001$$

Table 6.91: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Parental level of trust in news accessed and level of trust 'Gen Z' have in news accessed via a news organisation's website

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
Extremely trusting - Trusting	0	0.000	Yes
Extremely trusting - Not trusting	1	0.003	Yes
Extremely trusting - Neutral	1	0.000	Yes
Extremely trusting - Extremely not trusting	1	0.013	Yes
Trusting - Not trusting	1	1.000	No
Trusting - Neutral	1	0.054	No
Trusting - Extremely not trusting	1	0.452	No
Not trusting - Neutral	0	1.000	No
Not trusting - Extremely not trusting	0	1.000	No
Neutral - Extremely not trusting	0	1.000	No

This analysis (Table 6.90) explored whether respondents' trust in news accessed through a news organisation's website was influenced by how trusting they perceived their parents to be toward news in general. The

Kruskal-Wallis test revealed a statistically significant difference between the groups, with $H(4) = 48.446$ and a p-value of less than 0.001. This suggests that the level of parental trust, as perceived by the respondents, was meaningfully linked to how much trust they themselves placed in news from official news websites.

Looking at the mean ranks, a clear pattern emerges. Respondents who described their parents as either "extremely trusting" or "trusting" showed the highest levels of trust in news from these websites, both with a mean rank of 2. In contrast, those who viewed their parents as "neutral", "not trusting", or "extremely not trusting" all had a mean rank of 3, indicating lower levels of trust. This points to a divide between those who grew up with more trusting parental attitudes and those who did not.

The post-hoc analysis using Dunn's test with Bonferroni correction (Table 6.91) confirmed that the "extremely trusting" group stood apart from all others. Significant differences were found between this group and each of the other four, including the "trusting" group, despite their identical mean ranks. This suggests that even subtle differences in perceived parental trust can have a measurable impact. However, no significant differences were found among the remaining groups, indicating that once parental trust dropped below the "extremely trusting" level, respondents' own trust in news websites tended to level out at a lower point.

In summary, the findings suggest that respondents who saw their parents as highly trusting of news were more likely to trust news accessed via official websites themselves. This reinforces the idea of intergenerational influence, where higher parental trust appears to foster greater confidence in formal news sources. Meanwhile, those who perceived their parents as less trusting showed similarly low levels of trust, with little variation between them.

Table 6.92: Kruskal-Wallis Test Results: Parental level of trust in news accessed and level of trust 'Gen Z' have in news accessed via a News App

Parental level of trust in news accessed	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of level of trust in news accessed via a News App
Extremely trusting	268	3
Trusting	344	3
Neutral	134	3
Not trusting	41	4
Extremely not trusting	13	3

Test Statistics:

$$H(4) = 12.907, p = 0.012$$

Table 6.93: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Parental level of trust in news accessed and level of trust 'Gen Z' have in news accessed via a News App

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
Extremely trusting - Not trusting	1	1.000	No
Extremely trusting - Trusting	0	1.000	No
Extremely trusting - Neutral	0	0.044	Yes
Extremely trusting - Not trusting	1	0.065	No
Extremely not trusting - Trusting	1	1.000	No
Extremely not trusting - Neutral	1	1.000	No
Extremely not trusting - Not trusting	1	1.000	No
Somewhat trusting - Neutral	0	0.620	No
Somewhat trusting - Not trusting	1	0.367	No
Neutral - Not trusting	1	1.000	No

This analysis looked at whether respondents' trust in news accessed via a news app was linked to how trusting they perceived their parents to be toward news. The Kruskal-Wallis test showed a statistically significant difference between groups ($H(4) = 12.907, p = 0.012$), suggesting some association.

Despite this, mean ranks were nearly identical across most groups, with all but the "not trusting" group scoring a 3. The "not trusting" group had a slightly higher mean rank of 4, indicating marginally lower trust in news apps. Only one pairwise comparison (between the "extremely trusting" and "neutral" groups) was statistically significant ($p = 0.044$), though the difference was small. All other comparisons showed no significant differences.

In short, while there is a statistically significant link between perceived parental trust and trust in news apps, the actual differences between groups are minimal. Most respondents reported similar levels of trust, regardless of parental influence.

Table 6.94: Kruskal-Wallis Test Results: Parental level of trust in news accessed and level of trust 'Gen Z' have in news accessed via social media

Parental level of trust in news accessed	Sample Size (n)	Mean Rank of level of trust in news accessed via social media
Extremely trusting	268	3
Trusting	344	3
Neutral	134	3
Not trusting	41	3
Extremely not trusting	13	4

Test Statistics:

$H(4) = 11.012, p = 0.026$

Table 6.95: Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons (Dunn's Test, Bonferroni-adjusted) Parental level of trust in news accessed and level of trust 'Gen Z' have in news accessed via social media

Comparison	Mean Rank Difference	Adjusted p-value	Significant?
Extremely Trusting - Trusting	0	0.769	No
Extremely trusting - Neutral	0	0.258	No
Extremely trusting - Not trusting	0	0.418	No
Extremely trusting - Extremely not trusting	1	0.298	No
Trusting - Neutral	0	1.000	No
Trusting - Not trusting	0	1.000	No
Trusting - Extremely not trusting	1	0.942	No
Neutral - Not trusting	0	1.000	No
Neutral - Extremely not trusting	1	1.000	No
Not trusting - Extremely not trusting	1	1.000	No

The Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted to determine whether respondents' trust in news accessed via social media varied according to how trusting they perceived their parents to be toward news in general (Table 6.94). The test produced a statistically significant result ($H(4) = 11.012, p = 0.026$), suggesting some variation in trust levels across the different parental trust groups.

Despite this, the mean ranks were largely uniform. Respondents who perceived their parents as "extremely trusting", "trusting", "neutral", or "not trusting" all had a mean rank of 3, while those who viewed their parents as "extremely not trusting" had a slightly higher mean rank of 4, indicating a marginal decrease in trust.

However, none of the post-hoc pairwise comparisons reached statistical significance (Table 6.95). All adjusted p -values were well above the 0.05

threshold, meaning that the observed differences between groups were not meaningful in practical terms.

In summary, although the overall test suggests a statistically significant relationship between perceived parental trust and trust in news accessed via social media, the actual differences between groups are minimal. Trust levels remained broadly consistent regardless of parental trust background

6.5 Discussion

This section of Chapter 6 will discuss the overall findings from the Kruskal-Wallis Testing. It is split into two sections, given the links demonstrated with Education and Socio-economic status. Furthermore, the independent variable of parental-modelling yielded a greater amount of data.

6.5.1 Education and Socio-economic status

The findings presented in the study offer a compelling lens through which to examine the influence of educational background and socio-economic status on news consumption, engagement, and trust among post-millennials.

Applying Everett Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation Theory (2003) provides a robust theoretical framework for interpreting these patterns. In this context, news engagement behaviours, such as accessing news via websites, apps, or social media, are conceptualised as innovations that diffuse through a population over time. The adoption of these behaviours is not uniform but is shaped by structural, cognitive, and social factors, including education and socio-economic status.

According to Rogers (2003), the diffusion of innovations occurs through five stages: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation. Individuals with higher levels of education are more likely to navigate these stages effectively due to their enhanced media literacy and critical thinking skills (Buć, & Divjak, 2015). This is supported by the study's findings, which show that participants with higher educational attainment accessed news from official websites more frequently and expressed greater trust in these sources. These behaviours align with the knowledge and persuasion stages of the diffusion process, where awareness of an innovation and a favourable

attitude towards it are essential for adoption. Research by Van Deursen and van Dijk (2014) similarly found that individuals with higher education levels are more adept at using the internet for information-seeking purposes, including news consumption, due to their superior digital skills. This supports the notion that education enhances the capacity to evaluate and adopt new media practices.

Moreover, individuals with higher education may function as opinion leaders within their social networks, a key concept in Rogers' theory. These individuals not only adopt innovations earlier but also influence others' adoption decisions through interpersonal communication and modelling. Mbatha (2024) expands on this by noting that early adopters often occupy influential social positions, enabling them to shape the diffusion trajectory within their communities. The study's data supports this, showing that higher education groups were more likely to engage with and trust digital news platforms, suggesting they may serve as conduits for the diffusion of these behaviours within their networks.

Socio-economic status also plays a critical role in shaping the diffusion of news engagement behaviours. The study reveals that individuals from higher socio-economic backgrounds (groups A and B) were more likely to access news via digital platforms and expressed higher levels of trust in these sources. This can be attributed to greater access to digital infrastructure, such as reliable internet and up-to-date devices, which facilitates early adoption. Hargittai (2010) emphasises that digital inequality is not merely about access but also about the skills and support needed to use digital technologies effectively. Conversely, those from lower socio-economic backgrounds (particularly group E) were less likely to engage with or trust digital news platforms. This disparity reflects the structural barriers that inhibit the diffusion of innovations among disadvantaged groups, including limited access to technology and lower levels of digital literacy.

The study also found that individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds were more likely to engage in online commenting. While

traditional forms of news engagement may be less prevalent among these groups, alternative forms of participation - such as commenting or sharing on social media - may serve as accessible entry points into the news ecosystem. These behaviours, though different in form, still represent innovations in how individuals interact with news and can be understood within the DOI framework as adaptations to contextual constraints. Livingstone and Helsper (2007) argue that socio-economic background shapes not only access to digital media but also the nature and quality of engagement, supporting the idea that lower SES groups may engage in more participatory but less institutionally anchored forms of news interaction.

The findings further indicate that early exposure to news within the home, a factor influenced by both education and socio-economic status, significantly affects later news engagement. This supports the idea that the diffusion of innovations is not only a matter of individual choice but is deeply embedded in social and familial contexts. Parental modelling of news consumption behaviours can serve as a primary channel through which young people acquire knowledge and develop attitudes towards news, thereby influencing their position within the diffusion curve. Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory complements this view, suggesting that behaviours observed in the home are internalised and reproduced, reinforcing the diffusion of news engagement practices across generations.

The application of Diffusion of Innovation Theory to these findings elucidates the mechanisms through which educational and socio-economic factors shape the adoption of news engagement behaviours among post-millennials. It highlights the importance of access, literacy, and social influence in facilitating or hindering the diffusion process. These insights have significant implications for media organisations, educators, and policymakers seeking to promote equitable and informed news consumption across diverse segments of the population.

When analysing the influence of education levels on news consumption and habits, it is unsurprising to observe crossovers between education and

socio-economic status. Multiple studies and reports (Blundell *et al.*, 2022; Office for Students, 2020; Taylor and Cantwell, 2019) have established that educational attainment and wealth are often linked. Individuals from less affluent families and areas tend to achieve lower educational results compared to those from higher socio-economic backgrounds. This crossover suggests that higher socio-economic status provides better access to quality education, enhancing critical thinking and media literacy skills essential for effective news consumption. Additionally, wealthier individuals may have more stable economic conditions, allowing them to allocate time and resources to stay informed about current events. Higher socio-economic status is also associated with greater cultural capital and better access to digital devices and the internet, shaping news consumption habits and reinforcing positive behaviours through social networks. These crossovers highlight the complex interplay between education and socio-economic status, suggesting that efforts to improve news consumption and media literacy must address both educational and socio-economic disparities.

Of the Kruskal-Wallis Tests which reported significance, educational levels groupings and socio-economic groupings had five in common:

- 1) Trust in a news organisation's website
- 2) Frequency of engagement with a news organisation's website
- 3) Frequency of news consumed within the home when growing up
- 4) Trust in news Apps
- 5) Likelihood to comment on online content

With the first four test reporting statistical significance, those with a higher level of education or from a higher socio-economic background, were more likely to trust or engage more frequently with the platform. Regarding the fifth test which showed significance, those that were educated at a higher level or were from a higher socio-economic background, were less likely to comment on online content. It is concluded that this is due to the overall access these groupings have to digital technology.

As previously discussed, higher education exposes individuals to digital technology, facilitating their ability to adopt and use new technologies effectively. From a Diffusion of Innovation perspective, this exposure accelerates the spread and acceptance of technological advancements among educated individuals (van Deursen and van Dijk, 2014).

Consequently, those with higher education are often early adopters and influencers in the technological landscape. In addition to this, those of a higher earning background would have the financial capabilities to access this technology (Broer *et al.*, 2019). DoI Theory states that technology is more likely to be adopted if its use is repeated and there is ease of access (Rogers, 2003). Additionally, the reliance of digital platforms during COVID-19 highlighted digital poverty and how some students were likely to be left behind without the necessary access to digital technology (Office for Students, 2020; Seah, 2020). The pandemic also led to the upskilling and updating of software due to the need to go digital, emphasising how society plays a role in developing technologies. Level of education and socio-economic status therefore both account for the frequency of engagement with the aforementioned platforms. Regarding trust, this is also likely due to the familiarity they have with the digital platforms (Eveland and Scheufele, 2000).

Interestingly, those educated at a lower level and from a lower socio-economic status, were the people who were most likely to comment on online content and become actants in the media. In recent years, there has been an influx of online hate and what is known as trolling (BBC News, 2020; Howard *et al.*, 2019). While specific academic studies on this exact topic are limited, it is widely acknowledged that a lack of digital literacy can contribute to negative online behaviours. Research has shown that digital literacy, which includes skills in internet research, content creation, and online communication, is crucial for navigating the online environment responsibly (Vissenberg *et al.*, 2022). For instance, studies have found that poor digital literacy can lead to increased instances of cyberbullying and online harassment, which in turn can cause anxiety, depression, and

feelings of loneliness among individuals (Martellozzo and Jane, 2017; Smith *et al.*, 2008). Subsequently demonstrating that, enhancing digital literacy is essential to mitigate these negative online behaviours and promote a safer digital space. It also provides an indication as to why those educated at lower levels and from lower socio-economic statuses are more likely to publicly add to online discussions.

6.5.2 Parental influences on News Consumption and Trust

Kruskal-Wallis Testing has given clear indications that there is a strong element of parental/guardian influence in terms of news consumption and trust in news. According to Generational Theory (Strauss and Howe, 1991b), it is possible for previous generations to adopt characteristics from prior generations. This is certainly evident in Section 6.4.1 whereby overall access to the news in the home in childhood clearly had an impact on frequency of news consumption in adulthood, along with trust in the information obtained. Although there were variations between platforms, it was apparent that more engagement from parents had resulted in a higher frequency of overall news consumption in later years. Furthermore, post-millennials who had accessed news more when growing up, also had higher levels of trust across platforms. This can be accredited to exposure to news during their formative years.

As evidenced in this thesis (See Sections 2.2.5 and 5.2.1), Generation Z are consuming news and are civic minded; they are just doing so in different ways to previous generations (Chen and Pain, 2021; Drok *et al.*, 2018; Jigsaw Research, 2022; Marchi and Clark, 2018). The Kruskal-Wallis Tests have added credence to this statement and also demonstrated that attitudes towards news overall, may be inherited regardless of platform through modelling (Bandura, 1977). However, the impact of parental influence is limited and is subject to cultural influences such as peer groups, educational level and socio-economic background (Hall *et al.*, 2015). These subsequently have an impact on how post-millennials engage with news content from an ANT perspective and their expectations of digital technology.

Regarding the frequency of television consumption amongst Generation Z; whilst parental engagement has influenced the levels of consumption and attitudes, television is a platform which has developed at an extremely fast pace. This suggests it is not only parental influence which has prompted engagement. Since its digitalisation, society has seen the launch of Smart TVs, which allows for easy streaming and greater convenience with 24-hour news channels and recording facilities meaning the need to watch in real-time is no longer relevant (Parliament.UK, 2010; Rozgonyi, 2019; Varmarken *et al.*, 2020). This Smart technology is a replica of mobile smart devices which also allows for an element of personalisation in the form of algorithms and therefore enables audiences to engage with content they find interesting (Flaxman *et al.*, 2016; Thorson, 2020). Although newspapers have predominantly migrated online (Benton, 2018; *The Independent*, 2016), this has proven successful with news organisation's websites being identified as one of the most popular outlets for trusted content (See Section 5.2.1). However, figures have confirmed that print journalism is not a popular option amongst Generation Z and is on a decline (Jigsaw Research, 2022; Newman, 2009; Ofcom, 2020, 2019a).

Parental influence also demonstrated some limitations in terms of platform choices. Although it was noted that there were increases in frequency of use and trust in certain platforms depending on parental engagement with said platform. This was much less for the more traditional mediums – particularly print and radio. An initial interpretation could be that these findings go somewhat to discrediting Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory in the sense that attitudes modelled either verbally or physically by parents may be adopted by children. However, this does not signify that the attitudes may have been adopted from other sources such as peers. Interestingly, levels of trust were extremely low for print news regardless of parental engagement, however this was not the case with news from a news organisation's website. Given that many print organisations have migrated online, coupled with the popularity of organisations which were of print origin identified in Section 5.2.1, it appears that although post-millennials may not be inheriting platform choices, they may be inheriting an aspect of brand loyalty.

Nevertheless, this is speculation at this stage and would require further investigation.

Overall, the results provide strong empirical support for Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), which posits that individuals acquire behaviours through observation, imitation, and reinforcement. Across multiple platforms (TV, radio, print, websites, apps, and social media) Generation Z's patterns of news consumption and trust were significantly shaped by the behaviours and attitudes of their parents or guardians. For example, respondents who grew up in homes where news was accessed frequently were more likely to consume news regularly and to trust it, particularly when parents modelled consistent engagement with news media.

This intergenerational transmission of media habits is supported by recent academic literature. Wang *et al.* (2023) conducted a meta-analysis of parental mediation strategies and found that parental involvement and attitudes toward media were strong predictors of children's media behaviours. Active mediation (where parents discuss media content and model critical engagement) was particularly influential in shaping children's long-term media habits. Similarly, Stoilova *et al.* (2024) argue that parental mediation, including both active and restrictive strategies, plays a crucial role in shaping children's digital behaviours and attitudes. Their review highlights that while tools like parental controls have mixed outcomes, the broader context of parent-child interaction and modelling is essential for fostering healthy media engagement.

From a Generational Theory perspective (Strauss and Howe, 1991b), the findings reflect the idea that generational cohorts are shaped not only by shared historical events but also by the social environments in which they are raised. Generation Z, while often characterised by their digital fluency, still exhibit media behaviours that are strongly influenced by the habits and attitudes of their parents. This suggests that generational shifts in media consumption are not purely driven by technology or peer culture but are also deeply rooted in familial socialisation.

The implications of these findings are significant. They challenge the assumption that Generation Z's media habits are entirely self-directed or shaped solely by digital culture. Instead, they reveal that parental influence remains a powerful force, even in an era of individualised media consumption. This has important consequences for media literacy education, suggesting that interventions aimed at fostering critical engagement with news should consider the family context as a key site of influence.

The findings also highlight the durability of early media exposure. Respondents who grew up in homes with frequent news engagement not only consumed more news but also exhibited higher levels of trust in those sources. This supports the view that media habits and attitudes formed during childhood and adolescence can persist into adulthood, shaping how individuals navigate complex information environments.

Finally, the data suggests that the absence of parental engagement or trust in news can lead to lower levels of trust and engagement among young people. This is particularly relevant in the current media landscape, where misinformation and distrust in journalism are growing concerns. Understanding the role of parental modelling in shaping trust can inform strategies to rebuild public confidence in news media, especially among younger audiences.

In conclusion, the findings reinforce the relevance of Social Learning Theory and Generational Theory in explaining how Generation Z forms its media habits and trust orientations. They also point to the need for a more nuanced understanding of intergenerational dynamics in media consumption, particularly in the context of rapidly evolving digital technologies and shifting public attitudes toward news.

6.6 Chapter Summary

These findings are important to academia for several reasons. First, they provide empirical evidence on the factors influencing news consumption and

trust among post-millennials, a demographic that is increasingly shaping the media landscape. Understanding these factors is crucial for developing effective strategies to engage this generation with reliable news sources and combat misinformation.

Chapter 6 of the study delves into second stage findings of this research, providing context for the primary results related to RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3. The chapter focuses on the independent variables within the theoretical framework, such as educational level, socio-economic status, and parental influence, and cross-references these with Diffusion of Innovation (Rogers, 2003), Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), and Actor Network Theory (Latour, 1996). Kruskal-Wallis Testing was used to analyse the quantitative data.

Research Question 4 aims to understand why post-millennials engage, consume, and trust news as they do. The study used a conceptual hierarchy combining multiple theories and independent variables to characterise Generation Z's news consumption, engagement, and trust.

The Kruskal-Wallis Tests revealed significant differences in news engagement and trust based on educational level, socio-economic status, and parental influence. For educational background, higher educational levels correlated with greater engagement and trust in news accessed via news organisation websites, news apps, and social media. This aligns with the Diffusion of Innovation theory, suggesting that higher education levels facilitate the adoption of digital technology, leading to increased news engagement and trust.

Socio-economic status also showed significant differences in news engagement and trust. Higher socio-economic groups showing greater engagement and trust in news accessed via various platforms. This supports the notion that socio-economic status influences access to digital technology and news consumption habits, as posited by the Diffusion of Innovation theory.

Parental influence was another critical factor. The frequency of news accessed in the home during childhood significantly impacted post-millennials' news engagement and trust. Higher parental engagement with news correlated with greater news consumption and trust among post-millennials. This finding aligns with Social Learning Theory, which suggests that behaviours and attitudes are learned through observation and modelling.

The study's findings highlight the importance of educational level, socio-economic status, and parental influence in shaping post-millennials' news consumption and trust. These factors interact with each other, creating a complex landscape of news engagement. The results emphasise the need for targeted interventions to improve news literacy and engagement among different demographic groups.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

The significant contribution of this research lies in its focus on post-millennial news consumption and trust in news during a transformative period, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings and contribution highlight the nuanced ways in which media literacy is constituted, examining in depth an often misunderstood demographic. This research provides major contributions to the literature and scholarship surrounding news audiences and engagement, specifically with regards to the 'Gen Z' demographic.

This chapter synthesises the findings of the data gathered from the survey of 800 post-millennial respondents and analysed through the lens of the conceptual theoretical framework found in Chapter 3. By addressing the research questions identified at the beginning of this thesis, Chapter 7 provides a comprehensive overview of the study's contributions to understanding the news consumption habits of Generation Z, bridging the knowledge gap which was highlighted in the literature review.

This concluding chapter is structured as follows: it begins with a summary of the key findings, detailing the key insights gained from the research with regards to news consumption and trust in news, addressing RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3. This is followed by a discussion of the findings which address RQ4, providing additional context and depth, by applying the independent variables identified within the conceptual framework illustrated in Chapter 3. Section 7.3 identifies the implications of the study and the significant contribution it makes to academia. Towards the end of the chapter, the limitations are addressed along with an acknowledgement of the constraints and challenges encountered during the study. Finally, it concludes with suggestions for future studies, proposing areas for further investigation to build on the findings of this thesis.

7.2 Summary of Key Findings

The first stage findings of this study reveal significant insights into the news consumption habits and trust levels of Generation Z. They specifically address RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3. The findings are framed through the lenses of ANT (Latour, 1996), SLT (Bandura, 1977) and DoI (Rogers, 2003). These theoretical concepts inform the idea that 'Gen Z' have achieved characteristics significant to them, which resonates the ethos of Strauss and Howe's Generational Theory (1991b). This is clearly illustrated in Chapter 3, where the conceptual theoretical framework highlights the hierarchal nature.

The second stage findings of this study delve deeper into the factors influencing Generation Z's news consumption patterns and trust levels. While the first stage findings provide a broad overview of how this demographic engages with news, the second stage findings offer a more nuanced understanding of the underlying influences and behaviours. They address RQ4: What are the reasons behind Generation Z's news consumption, engagement and trust?

This section draws together the findings from the first and second stage findings, offering an overall assessment of the study and its contribution and significance to the field of journalism and audience research.

7.2.1 News Consumption and Engagement with News

According to the data gathered from the survey, the following conclusions were made with regards to RQ1: How are Generation Z consuming and engaging with the news?

- 1) Generation Z, consume news through a variety of platforms, reflecting the multi-media tendencies of society overall (Alysen et al., 2020; Bull, 2015; Edgerly et al., 2018a). The results of the survey indicated that post-millennials access news through multiple platforms, including news websites, television, and social media. This multi-platform approach allows them to stay informed in a way that fits their lifestyle and preferences (Buglass *et al.*, 2017; Oberst *et al.*, 2017;

Reinikainen *et al.*, 2020). Nevertheless, digital formats are highly favoured due to their convenience and accessibility. This resonates DoI (Rogers, 2003), whereby the ease of accessibility is key in the adoption of digital technology. Subsequently, news websites and apps are particularly popular because they offer up-to-date information that can be accessed anytime and anywhere.

Furthermore, social media platforms play a significant role in how Generation Z consumes news. Platforms like Twitter and Instagram are not just for social interactions but also serve as important sources of news. However, this also means they are exposed to a mix of credible news and misinformation.

- 2) Regardless of the preference for digital platforms, television remains a significant news source for those post-millennials who consume news regularly. Arguably, this is a direct result of the digitalisation of television, whereby news may be streamed and accessed 24 hours a day (Parliament.UK, 2010; Rozgonyi, 2019). This contrasts with other more traditional mediums such as radio and print, which were reported as the least popular source for news by 'Gen Z'. However, despite a decline in print and radio news consumption, there are indicators that news organisations are responding to this, with many digitally migrating (Hawkins, 2024): radio stations are embracing podcasting as a new way of storytelling (Lindgren and Loviglio, 2022); newspapers have also been moving content online for a number of years, with some organisations opting to become online only (Benton, 2018).
- 3) Generation Z's engagement with news is characterised by a preference for digital platforms, particularly social media, and a tendency to act as both consumers and distributors of news content. As previously stated, post-millennials primarily consume news through digital means, with social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook being the most popular. This preference is driven by the convenience, accessibility, and the ability to engage with a variety of content formats, including text, images, and videos. The digital nature of their news consumption allows them to stay

informed in real-time and access a wide range of perspectives. Nevertheless, 'Gen Z' is not just a passive audience; from an ANT perspective, they actively participate in the news cycle by sharing and disseminating news content. This participation is facilitated by the ease of sharing information on social media platforms (DoI). However, they are more likely to share content rather than comment on it, indicating a preference for spreading information over engaging in public discourse.

7.2.2 *Trust in News*

The following conclusions were made relating to RQ2: What are the levels of trust post-millennials have in the news that they are consuming?

- 4) Trust in news varies significantly across different platforms. News organisation websites and television are received as the most trustworthy sources, while social media, despite its popularity, is viewed with scepticism. Nevertheless, Twitter was reported as the third most trustworthy source for news at the time the survey was distributed. A common reasoning for this was that 'Gen Z' felt that they followed brands/people that they perceived credible and reliable. Kalogeropoulos and Newman (2017) identified that post-millennials are more likely to identify sources of news, which arguably gives them confidence in the sources that they are engaging with. This indicates a critical need for news organisations to maintain credibility and transparency to retain the trust of younger audiences. Despite their heavy reliance on social media for news, Generation Z exhibits a cautious approach towards the trustworthiness of the content which is reflective of the generational *turning* they are, according to Strauss and Howe (2009). They tend to cross-reference information from multiple sources, including traditional news websites and TV news, to verify the accuracy of the news they consume. This behaviour reflects their awareness of the prevalence of misinformation and their desire for credible information.
- 5) Parental engagement with news influences the trust levels of Generation Z. When parents trust certain news sources, their children are more likely to trust those sources as well. This intergenerational

transmission of trust underscores the importances of parental modelling in shaping media attitudes echoing the findings of Edgerly *et al.* (2018a). Observational learning, imitation, and reinforcement play crucial roles in how trust in news is developed resonating the concept of Bandura's SLT (1977).

- 6) Higher socio-economic status and education levels are associated with higher trust in news sources. Individuals from these backgrounds are more likely to engage with and trust news from reputable sources. They have access to a broader range of reputable news sources, including subscriptions to credible outlets and academic journals, which reinforces their trust in the news they consume. The Diffusion of Innovation Theory (Rogers, 2003) rationalises that individuals from higher socio-economic backgrounds and with higher education levels are more likely to adopt new technologies and practices, including media consumption habits, due to their accessibility to resources and information. This theory highlights their ability to engage with and trust digital news platforms more readily. Social Learning Theory also plays a role, as these individuals often model their news consumption and trust behaviours on their social and professional networks, reinforcing their selective sharing and higher trust in credible news sources.

7.2.3 The Impact of COVID-19 on News Engagement and Trust

The data gathered provided the following conclusions relating to RQ3: Were the trust levels in news of post-millennials, along with their overall news consumption, impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic?

- 7) The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly influenced post-millennial news engagement and consumption patterns. Prior to the pandemic, Generation Z primarily accessed news through digital platforms, with social media, news organisation websites, and TV being the most popular sources. The pandemic, however, intensified these habits and brought about notable changes in both the frequency and trust in news consumption.

- 8) Before the first UK lockdown, post-millennials displayed a diverse approach to news consumption, favouring platforms that offered convenience and immediacy. Social media was the dominant source, with platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook being the preferred choices. This trend continued during the pandemic, but with increased frequency. The lockdowns and the constant influx of information regarding COVID-19 led to a heightened need for news, resulting in post-millennials seeking out news more frequently than before.
- 9) Interestingly, the pandemic also affected the trust levels in news amongst post-millennials. While social media remained a popular source, it was also the platform where trust was most questioned. The prevalence of misinformation and conflicting reports during the pandemic led to a decline in trust in social media news. Conversely, traditional news platforms like TV and news organisation websites saw an increase in trust. This shift indicates a preference for established and reliable sources during times of crisis.
- 10) Moreover, the pandemic underscored the importance of digital literacy among post-millennials. The ability to discern credible information from misinformation became crucial, as the infodemic (Cinelli *et al.*, 2020b; Nielsen *et al.*, 2020; Orso *et al.*, 2020) surrounding COVID-19 posed significant challenges. This period highlighted the need for improved digital literacy education to equip young people with the skills necessary to navigate the complex media landscape.

7.2.4 Influence of Socio-Economic Status and Education

The data obtained from the surveys provided the following findings in relation to the two independent variables – socio-economic status and educational level:

- 11) The analysis demonstrates that socio-economic status and educational background significantly influence news consumption patterns and trust levels among Generation Z. Individuals from higher socio-economic backgrounds and with higher educational attainment

are more likely to engage with news organisation websites and trust the information obtained from these sources. This demographic tends to have greater access to digital technology and resources, facilitating frequent and informed news consumption (Aalberg *et al.*, 2013; Broer *et al.*, 2019; JRN, 2019; von Stumm, 2017).

- 12) Post-millennials from lower socio-economic backgrounds exhibit lower levels of trust and engagement with news. This digital divide suggests that financial constraints and limited access to digital technology hinder their ability to engage with and trust digital news platforms. The findings indicate that educational initiatives aimed at improving digital literacy and access to digital technology, could help bridge this gap.
- 13) In terms of engagement, post-millennials from higher socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to share news content online, particularly through social media platforms. They often share content that aligns with their interests and values, such as political news, good news stories, and entertainment. However, they are less likely to comment on news stories, possibly due to a greater awareness of the potential repercussions of online interactions.

7.2.5 Parental Influence on News Habits

With regards to parental influence, the data provided the following:

- 14) As identified by previous scholars (*Bentler and Speckart, 1979; Del Vicario et al., 2017; Edgerly et al., 2018a*) modelling plays a crucial role in shaping the news consumption habits and trust levels of Generation Z. This study finds that respondents who were exposed to news more frequently in their homes during childhood, are more likely to consume and trust news in adulthood. This influence is particularly evident in the consumption of traditional media such as TV news and print journalism, although it extends to digital platforms as well. This suggests that early exposure to news creates a foundation for informed news habits later in life. However, the influence of parental modelling is limited by cultural and societal factors, such as peer influence and the digital environment.

- 15) In terms of engagement, post-millennials who had parents frequently engaging with news are more likely to share news content online. In addition to this, they tend to share content that resonates with their personal experiences and societal issues, such as political and community-related news. However, like their peers, they are cautious about commenting on news stories, reflecting a broader trend of preferring to share rather than engage in discussions.

7.2.6 Role of Digital Literacy

Finally, the data demonstrated further findings in relation to digital literacy:

- 16) The research underscores the importance of digital literacy in navigating the contemporary news landscape. Generation Z's ability to critically evaluate news sources and discern credible information is pivotal in mitigating the effects of misinformation and fake news. The findings suggest that enhancing digital literacy through education and awareness programs can foster more informed and discerning news consumers.
- 17) Digital literacy enables post-millennials to identify and trust reputable news sources, reducing their susceptibility to misinformation. This was demonstrated by the results of the survey: those with higher levels of digital literacy are more likely to engage with news organisation websites and trusted digital platforms. They are also more adept at using social media to access diverse viewpoints and share credible news content.
- 18) In terms of engagement, digitally literate post-millennials are more proactive in sharing news content that they find credible and relevant. They use social media platforms to disseminate information and raise awareness about important issues (Kühne, 2019; Marchi and Clark, 2018). However, they remain cautious about commenting on news stories, preferring to share content without directly engaging in online debates.

7.3 Implication of Research

The findings of this study provide valuable empirical data and theoretical insights that extend and enrich existing theories and literature on news consumption, trust, and engagement among Generation Z. The integration of multiple theories within the conceptual theoretical framework, offers a robust and comprehensive approach to understanding the multifaceted ways Generation Z engages with news. This research not only contributes to academic scholarship but also offers practical implications for media practitioners and policymakers, helping to develop more effective strategies to engage and inform younger audiences in a rapidly changing media landscape.

This research provides detailed insights into how post-millennials engage with news media. The findings highlight their preference for digital platforms and multi-media approach to news consumption. These results reflect those of previous scholars such as Diehl *et al.* (2019) who found that younger generations tended to use multi-platforms for news consumption more than older generations. They recommended further studies were needed to explore other demographic variables. This thesis explores other variables (socio-economic status, education and parental influence), and the impact they have on news consumption, engagement and trust, building upon that prior research. Edgerly *et al.* (2018b, 2017) further emphasised Generation Z's multi-media preferences, along with the impact of parental modelling. Nevertheless, Edgerly *et al.* (2018b) urged for further study to examine how these preferences evolved over time (and with age). The findings of this thesis significantly contribute to the existing body of knowledge, by offering a contemporary understanding of news consumption amongst young adults; something which is crucial for adapting strategies and policies.

To further enhance the understanding of news consumption, engagement and among Generation Z, the integration of a theoretical framework is applied. This robust hierarchal theoretical framework incorporates multiple theoretical concepts in order to understand the characteristics of 'Gen Z' from a Generational Theory (Strauss and Howe, 2009) perspective. The

interdisciplinary approach taken by incorporating Actor Network Theory (Latour, 1996), Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) and Diffusion of Innovation (Rogers, 2007) enriches academic discussion, by demonstrating how these theories can be applied to modern day journalism studies. It provides a comprehensive lens through which to view audience news consumption and engagement.

Furthermore, this research sheds light on the varying levels of trust Generation Z places in different news sources and media platforms. This is particularly relevant in the context of the increasing prevalence of misinformation highlighted by Cinelli *et al* (2020) during the COVID-19 pandemic. By identifying the factors which influence trust, the study contributes valuable data that can inform future research on news credibility and trust-building strategies. This builds upon Kalogeropoulos *et al.* (2019) study which examined the relationship between news consumption patterns and trust in news. This thesis provides an alternative perspective by exploring the influence of socio-economic status, educational level and parental influence on news consumption and trust as opposed to political and business influences. Furthermore, it gives an insight into the 'Gen Z' demographic news consumption, engagement and trust, rather than focussing on a much broader audience.

Marchi and Clark (2018), found in their study that post-millennials would share news and saw themselves as part of a larger community which could make a difference - not passive followers but active participants in the news cycle process. The findings of this thesis clearly indicate that Generation Z continue to disseminate information echoing Marchi and Clark's research but adding an up-to-date analysis. Moreover, it highlights that digital literacy is crucial in navigating the contemporary news landscape. This is because the ability to critically evaluate news sources and discern credible information is pivotal in mitigating the effects of misinformation and its potential to spread.

As identified in previous works (Cinelli *et al.*, 2020; Nielsen *et al.*, 2020), there was an infodemic during the COVID-19 Pandemic. This research

captures the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on news consumption, engagement and trust. It provides a unique temporal perspective on how crises can alter media habits, contributing to the broader academic understanding of media consumption during significant global events. This can serve as a reference point for future studies on media behaviour during crises.

7.4 Limitations of Study and Future Studies

While this study provides valuable insights into Generation Z's news consumption patterns and trust levels, several limitations should be acknowledged. Addressing these limitations in future research can enhance the robustness and generalisation of the findings.

This study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, a period marked by significant changes in news consumption habits. The pandemic led to an increased reliance on digital news sources as people sought timely updates on the evolving situation. However, these changes might be temporary, and it is unclear whether these habits will persist in the long-term. The study captures a unique moment in time, reflecting the immediate impact of the pandemic on news consumption. While this provides valuable insights, it also means that the findings may not be fully generalised to non-pandemic conditions. To address this limitation, future research should include longitudinal studies to track changes in news consumption habits over time, both during and after the pandemic. This approach would help determine whether the observed changes are temporary or indicative of longer-term trends.

This study focused on individuals born between 1999 and 2002, representing a specific segment of Generation Z. Although this was to avoid *cuspers* (as identified within the methodology), this narrow age range may not fully capture the diversity of experiences and behaviours within the broader Generation Z cohort. Additionally, the study was conducted within the UK, and the findings may not be applicable to Generation Z individuals in other countries with different media landscapes and cultural contexts. Future research should aim to include a more diverse sample, encompassing

various socio-economic statuses, educational levels, and geographic regions to provide a more comprehensive understanding of Generation Z's news consumption habits. Comparative studies across different countries and cultures, such as those conducted by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (Newman *et al.*, 2020), can offer valuable insights into the global dynamics of news consumption.

The study did not examine the implications of artificial intelligence (AI) in journalism, which is becoming increasingly relevant. AI technologies, such as automated news writing and personalised news feeds, are transforming how news is produced and consumed. Further research is needed to understand how AI-generated content affects trust, engagement, and perceptions of news among Generation Z. This is particularly important as AI continues to evolve and integrate into the media industry. Researchers should investigate the ethical implications of AI in journalism and its impact on news credibility and audience trust.

The study highlights the significant role of social media in news dissemination but also points out the uncertainties surrounding the future of these platforms. Issues such as platform bans, changes in ownership, and regulatory challenges can impact their reliability and popularity. News organisations are advised to diversify their strategies beyond social media to ensure they can reach audiences through multiple channels. Over-reliance on social media can be precarious due to the potential for misinformation and the volatile nature of these platforms. Future research should explore alternative news dissemination strategies and the effectiveness of different platforms in reaching diverse audiences.

Despite these limitations, the study provides a robust foundation for understanding Generation Z's news consumption and trust dynamics. By acknowledging these limitations and addressing them in future research, scholars can build upon the findings and further enhance knowledge of this digital-native generation's interaction with news media. Future studies should explore the long-term effects of digital news consumption on civic

engagement and political participation among Generation Z. Additionally, research should investigate the role of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and machine learning, in shaping news consumption and trust. Longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into the evolving news habits of Generation Z and the factors influencing their trust in news over time. By addressing these limitations, future research can provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of Generation Z's news consumption patterns and trust levels.

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Appendix A Focus Group Transcripts

A.1 Focus Group 1 Transcript

Focus Group 1 Transcript

Date: 29th April 2019

Participants: Males 5 (M1, M2, M3, M4, M5) Females 2 (F1, F2)

Duration: 39'30"

RESEARCHER: This is an initial study into how post-millennials are accessing and defining the news. Not much has been done in this area. It's hoped this research will help to guide news outlets in how they should be catering for future audiences. This is a focus group. Ideally I'd like you to speak to each other about what you define as news and where you access it. I want your views, not mine, so I'll take as little part as possible. I'm not testing you for right or wrong answers – I've got some broad questions to get the ball rolling or put things back on track. You can say as much or little as you like, but I may interject if someone doesn't seem to be getting the opportunity to speak; other than that, I'll leave it to you. The conversation's being recorded so I may transcribe it later. I'll also be taking notes just to make it easier to identify who says what when listening back. I'll be the only person to listen to the recording and nobody will be named in the transcript. The results will be written up and published in my thesis and also at a conference – again nobody will be identified. Any questions? You can always ask later if you wish. You may also withdraw from the study at any time. Is everyone happy for the recording to go ahead?

PARTICIPANTS TOGETHER: Nod indicating agreement.

RESEARCHER: Let's just introduce ourselves and maybe give an interesting fact – doesn't matter if you can't think of one off the top of your head, it can just be about where you're from or studying.

INTRODUCTIONS GIVEN AND PARTICIPANTS RELAX

RESEARCHER: Now don't worry if you have different views on anything or disagree with something said; all contributions are valuable. Again, try to speak to each other rather than me. Now, how often do you think people in your age group pick up a newspaper?

PARTICIPANTS SPEAK AT ONCE: Never, not ever

F1: Unless it's left over on the train

M3: Sports maybe if they're interested in sports

M2: Yeah if they like sports maybe or page three

PARTICIPANTS LAUGH

F1: I don't think they have page three anymore

M1: They're irrelevant

M3: People just like to scroll on their phones and have a look

RESEARCHER: Why do you think that is?

M1: Because the purpose of them is to provide news, why would you ever go out and buy something when you can get instant online news whenever you want, wherever you are? It's a bit like taking the bus when you've got a car. You just do...

F1: Yeah you have to go out and buy the paper or at least go in and get it.

M2: I just think it's too much effort for people.

F1: The phone is just in your hand so you can just check on it whenever you want

M1: The other thing is with newspapers you're looking at one view point from one newspaper. Obviously you have different aspects like the Guardian may cover it from a more financial point of view whereas the Sun may cover it from a more light read light-hearted sort of thing. If you google anything on your phone you can instantly look at five webpages to read one news article and get various viewpoints.

M2: I'm not actually convinced that anyone would pick up a newspaper because they want to read the news. I don't think people our age are actually interested in the news. You know, getting a newspaper itself means, you know that you actually want to read the news whereas your phone, you're just using....

M4: The news online is more for global market rather than a country focused on a place.

M2: So you can look around a bit more

M4: So you have an idea of what everyone thinks about it.

M1: Newspapers are frustrating too as you can only read what they put in them. You've not got that access to everything. They decide they want to write something, for example on Syria, on the war in Syria then that is all you read, you can't then take that anywhere else without finding other ways to do it whether that's a phone or computer or another newspaper. You're just completely isolates the information they're trying to....

F1: Or maybe the size of the newspaper, you don't want to be carrying a newspaper and walking all over with a newspaper so the phone is easier.

M3: I feel like the newspaper, it's just one point, you go on your phone and you can search loads about what's going on.

RESEARCHER: Do you think all that applies to you? You've just spoken about young people in general, but what about you personally?

M2: Ultimately, I think it's down to the fact that people just aren't that interested. People have more things to do whereas if you know, to read a newspaper it takes half a day. People don't have loads of time or whatever. It's easier to spend your time that's less taxing.

M1: I think news is becoming outdated as a general thing. Very few people – I mean ten years ago people would sit down and watch the six o'clock news. That isn't a thing anymore. Six o'clock news – very few people one are actually around at 6 o'clock to sit and watch the news or read a newspaper and two a lot of people aren't that interested because information naturally finds its way to you through social media and other means whereas going and potentially looking for news isn't so much of a thing anymore. It doesn't...

M2: Not just that, you're at home, you've got a TV licence. I'm not paying, I don't have one, I'm not...

M1: Yeah
exactly..

M2: So people of a certain ages don't actually have contact with the news whatever, BBC news whatever

F1: Yeah mmmm

RESEARCHER: You kind of touched on with watching and listening to the news. Can you just expand? Do you think people actually listen to it because you mentioned watching it...

M3: News is quite depressing too

F1: Yeah

M2: Yeah there are positive things but it's so focussed on big stories like, I don't know, Notre Dam and it's like I'm bored, I'm sick and tired of... I know that's bad but I'm sick and tired of listening.. it just gets bit... you know... repetitive.

M1: It's informative but it's never truly informative. It's all on...on a very low level... it's almost gossip. It doesn't ever benefit you in the future. It's not like a piece of information you retain and at some point in your life it may come in useful. It's purely just an act that's happened no different to did you know so and so fell down the stairs. As silly as it sounds, that's a low level of what the news is. It's just information about what's happened. It's not information about a task or a process or a new idea, it's just things that have happened which in my eyes I just don't find interesting at all...

M2: Yeah but it's what you class of news, not just sitting down and watching the news, the news can be a brand new innovative car design or entertaining

M1: Yeah

M4: Yeah they also want to be kind of entertaining so they pick the ones we kind of want to know, what people would like to hear rather than what they need to...

F1: Yes that's true

M3: You don't get the full global news, you get what they want you to get.

M2: I find the news biased as well especially it can be quite biased. I mean I stopped watching the news when I thought some things were..cos I've read different, obviously if you read different like you were saying, different points of views, if you watch something live or read it it feels like you can't rely on it if it's a different point of view

M4: Especially if they're just written by like one journalist

M2: Especially when you hear politicians and politics like it's just what? You've clearly got an agenda. It seems like that quite often.

F1: Brexit is a key example, I mean it's not like they just can't make up their mind on it and they've not listened to us and it's just not been...They tell us what they want to and all the Propaganda...

M2: Brexit's another thing, it's it's really is 1984 you know what I mean like you're...it's Big Brother. They're telling you what you should think and telling you whatever and it's like the intelligent thing to do and things like that. Even religion and things like that. People are like atheist and all that because popular culture is to be atheist and actually it seems to be all unintelligent and all that but anyway...

M1: The big one on religion is because of the propaganda they've created around.... Some people are actually afraid to speak to a Muslim about their religion because they find it...because of the image the news has created around that religion specifically and I've got no problem with any religion, I'll speak to anyone about anything but people are afraid to speak to genuine Muslim people and understand it from their point of view cos of the images which are created from the media. I know where from I live, which is a very rural, very white community, there's a lot of hatred towards people with no real justification behind it. It's massive and you speak to them and like you go to the local pub which is all white middle aged men and they've all got a problem with Muslims especially and you speak to them and your just you don't know what you're talking about because they get the image from the news of what's happening in the Middle East with extremist groups which are a very small proportion and then they translate that into their whole life with normal people. And that's the big thing with the news. It does portray an image which isn't always necessarily right and they are informed information because it has to be, they can't make it up. It's still a view point which isn't necessarily correct.

M2: Sorry I don't entirely agree what you said there basically cos I think from you saying that I mean the very consensus you start off saying white mean

M1 Yeah no

M2: You can't say anything about that

M1 That's the correct terminology for....

M2: But why are you classifying people? By classifying people that, you're classifying everybody else...

M1: Because it's the same group of people, but they're the same group of people that classify Muslim men and women and say they're nasty people. And those group of people are classified by those groups of people so why shouldn't they themselves be classified as a group of white middle aged males? They're classifying other people

M2: I think this has slightly gone off topic as well.

RESEARCHER: I think you touched on stereotypically

M1: yeah they are and I think they're sometimes portrayed in the news wrongly sometimes very wrongly

M4: Like too extreme

M1: Yeah they make it too extreme as you've touched on it's always negative, it's never positive. You always see the bad side of every group of people whether it's white males...

M2: Again that's the classification of news. If you're watching errrr if you're reading a very factual newspaper it's gonna be touching on the facts rather than, I dunno, the sun which is gossip...

F1: I love Daily Mail...

M1: Yeah this is what I mean

F1: I absolutely love the Daily Mail but I just read it for the pictures.

M2: It's not quite reading
(LAUGHS)

F1: (LAUGHS) Just look at the pictures and uuumm it kind of gets you up to speed with what's going on but um and you'll just hear all the stupid stories and then they'll appear on the BBC like a week later and you're like oh I knew about that because I read it in the Daily Mail although I know it's totally not what you should use for the most up to date factual news.

M1: But the thing is news I think is just way too bias

M3: Yeah

M1: I personally really dislike the news. I don't think it's a good source of information and again it does touch back on the thing of what you classify as news because to me I classify as news newspapers and news programmes. I don't... the internet... I know it's a massive thing but the internet I believe is the best source of information ever created because it gives a viewpoint from every single person who has any involvement in it....

M4: Yeah I agree...

M1: You can read around every subject from every different viewpoint and it's not necessarily created by the BBC.

M2: Yeah but with that, you don't know if it's...like...good

M5:

What factual?

M2: Yeah

M4: Well that's why you don't just read one

M1: Yeah you don't..

M4: You read everyone's point of view and then make your own mind up.

M1: You have to make that decision whether you agree or disagree with it.

M2: Tell me the truth though do you actually...

M1 I read...

M2: Do you read seven different

M1: You ask the question..

M4: If I want to know more about it

M2 If you're interested...

M4: If I'm interented. If I'm not I'll just scroll through

M3: if you're interested I the subject you'll read more than one point of view.

M2: What's your opinion on like social media then cos I mean...

M1: I really like social media

M2: For news?

M1: Yeah

M2: That's the worse place to have news at...

M1: No cos it depends, this is where, you know when you said to me earlier....

M2: What about what about Theresa May, like everbody's like (Inaudible)

M1: Do you know when you said to me earlier how do I know so much random stuff which is completely irrelevant but I like know random stuff? It's from social media because I always, it's about who you follow, who you integrate yourself MY girlfriend's facebook's full of Kim Kardashian cos that's who she likes but mines full of engineering stuff...

(ALL LAUGHING)

M1: It all depends on what you like as a person.

M3: Yeah I agree it depends what you follow and what you look at so if you're looking at certain things you're gonna get certain things.

F1: Yeah

M4: It's more personalised...

F1: Yeah, that's how I read my news. My phone's got a section if I swipe left it comes on so I've got Pokemon and Avengersf (LAUGHS)

M3: It's like if I swipe a certain way, the first thing which comes on is the football scores.

M1: Yeah exactly

M3: So it tells you straight away

M1: Social media's how you utilise in a way that's gain of information or gain of someone you particularly enjoy reading about like my girlfriend Kim Kardashian, she likes the Kardashians so her interests are there and mine's like watching how houses are made and how things work so always get things on how things work and then I take that information and take it to other aspects of reading around subjects and knowledge that I want to gain for myself.

M2: What about YouTube then because..

M1: I love YouTube

M2: (Cos YouTube is news)

M1: Yeah

RESEARCHER: Can I just play devil's advocate for a second here, because you were saying earlier about news outlets, because I think you kind of got a bit confused with classifying news. News is the product rather than the outlet. You were talking about the outlet that's like the BBC and the Guardian.

M1: Yeah so I call that news...

M2: News can be anything...

RESEARCHER: News is the product, so what kind of products would you class as news so have you classed the Kardashians as news in some respect?

M1: Not so much no. I think maybe they're a (.1) they're an entertainment.

RESEARCHER: Well we'll come back to that one, but at one point, all of you were saying that you were fed the news from these outlets: print and TV on purpose but then the internet's become quite intuitive and then that will feed you your engineering news or your Kardashian news.

M1: Yeah but the internet's slightly different in the way it works is not like the news. With the news, so I'll be more specific. The BBC news at six o'clock –

YOU are given the information they want you to hear. You have no say in that. That is scheduled so there might be something about an illness in Africa and Notre-Dame and whatever there might be that is a scheduled thing. I could go on Facebook or Instagram or Twitter now and it would be completely different to every single person in this room. I guess that NOT intentionally because it's all done in the background and it's how the algorithms are written to function...

M2: But would you not say that's like I Said earlier about 1984, it's kind of the cookies and the rest of it finding out what you're interested in, WHAT you're doing. That's not news that FUNNELING the things you're interested in. That's not news.

F1: you have to dig further away ((inaudible) the internet you find the other views AND the extremists.

M2: ((INAUDIBLE INTERRUPTION) but then you're saying the advantage of the internet is a broad, broadening of your outlook but if you're looking, but yet it's being funnelled by everything because you're saying it's very specific and what you're interested in.

M1: But it's not what's specific. You can manipulate it to be what you want it to be.

M2: Yeah but then that makes it specific.

RESEARCHER: SO going back to it – how do you believe most people are accessing the news?

M2: Social media

RESEARCHER: So social media – which social media are we talking about?

M4: Twitter

F2: I use YouTube.

M4 AND M1 TOGETHER (I use YouTube a lot)

F2: Yeah it's very up to date and also it shows you other things even like in sports maybe Mo Salah can score one goal and the after one minute or two minutes, you find the video on YouTube. You find up to date things.

M2: It depends sort of what kind of news you're interested in. I mean different types of news are better for different social media platforms like that I don't know (.) FOOTBALL you know watching highlights like it's always better to watch on YouTube cos you can search specific things but then again, unless you're watching prime minister's questions, you're not gonna be watching, you might watch that...

M4: Yeah

F2: You can also find more related videos for this news you just... they're different from the newspaper. Newspapers just forcing you to read a specific (.) like (.) news about a specific situation or something and that's it. It's very limited but on YouTube you can find related things to....

RESEARCHER: Would that work a lot better than Facebook or...

M1: Facebook the platforms are very similar in that that's how they're programmed to follow your trends and the information they take. It's all... the concept behind them all is very similar. It's all to do with cookies and previous search history and interests and as daft as it sounds if you spend (.) FIVE minutes watching one video about cars but only spend thirty seconds watching videos about gaming, cars will become a more prominent thing in your, in your feed because it's all done off how much you interest you pay into certain aspects of the information that is available.

M2: Sorry but I really think that media and media and the news can be manipulated within social media. I think that's pretty much what happens when you look at something and somebody's snipped a video and it's taM4 out of context or said out of context. I mean

M3: Yeah that's possible

M2 I've said it myself especially with like politics and things like that (.) I've read things that people have said and things like that I mean especially I don't know, the general election and things like that I read things that people put. It said 'Oh I really don't know much about this but you should vote. I think that I'm going to vote for this person because they seem like the nice person. I don't really know much about politics and what they stand for but I think you should do the same' and it's like that's...

M1: I feel like that's a separate issue in itself though...

M2: Yeah but that's news and that's how people see news, that's what I'm trying to say. I think people read news because they don't read newspapers and because they don't access news online because I don't think people do honestly unless they're really that interested. I don't think people go to their web browsers searching for specific news. I mean... I think it's done through social media. People absorb it that way. And that's what I think is the problem with the news. I think it's very much 1984. Everything's given. YOU'RE told what you believe. YOU'RE told this because this is a general consensus and this is what people do and (.) that's done by social media...

M1: This issue goes beyond just the news though. This is actually, what you're talking about is a cultural issue...

M4: This is about people

M1 ...of people being told something and believing it and not taking the incentive to go further themselves.

M2: Yeah but that's the news.

GROUP: ((INAUDIBLE DISAGREEMENTS))

M1: Because I can speak for myself PERSONALLY, I don't take anything at face value. If I disagree with something I'll say. If I agree with something, I'll say. I will never, there will not be a single day where someone tells me "this is the opinion of me and you should believe it" because I'll say no.

M2: Yeah but here you specifically. I think the general people, generally mass aren't...

M1: But then that goes beyond just the news...

M2: ((INAUDIBLE))

M4: If you look online yeah, like if you wanna look at the news online you can look for further information about it and then you can decide if...

M2: Yeah but we're talking about how audiences get news presumably and we normally get news, I think, the vast majority of people see it through Facebook and social media because they're not that interested.

RESEARCHER: So they don't necessarily go out to look for it?

M2: No I don't they...

ALL: ((INAUDIBLE AGREEMENT))

F1: It's too depressing

M1: Which goes beyond they question of how we access news but you're saying people are manipulated and...

M2: That's what I'm saying...

M1: But I don't think that's strictly true, because I don't think

M2: But you might not be in this case but I think the vast majority of people

M1: I don't believe there's that many people that will take anything on Facebook

M3: Yeah

M1: DON'T GET me wrong there is some. I'm not trying to say that...

M2: Alright ok so...

M3: I think also some people, they just read the headline and they don't bother reading the article...

F1: Yeah

ALL: ((INAUDIBLE SPEAKING OVER EACH OTHER))

M3: Yeah I think that's what you're trying to get at

M2: Kind of. They'll see a video and they'll take it as fact. But...

M3: They don't see the WHOOOOLE thing, They don't see the WHOLE video.

M4: Ah I see what you mean

M3: I see where you're coming from (GESTURES TO M2) and I also see where you're (GESTURES TO M1) you're coming from in all this because you're saying people don't get manipulated. They do read, if they read into it a bit more, they won't be manipulated. But at the same time YOU'RE (gestures to M2) saying that they just read the headlines.

M4: But that's just not news now, that's just the people reading it.

M1: Yeah

ALL : (Inaudible sounds of agreement)

M1: It's gone beyond the platforms now, it's actually looking at the individuals themselves who are reading it.

ALL: (INAUDIBLE SPEAKING OVER EACH OTHER)

M3: There ARE some people who just read the headline.

M1: Yeah

M3: And they get manipulated by JUST the headline. But there are people who look at the headline and carry on reading and are "oh ok" so the headline was just TRENDING bait

M1: Yeah I mean who in this room reads a headline and takes it as truth EVERY SINGLE TIME?

M2: Yeah but also think the type of people who said they want to do this...

M1: Yeah I know I know exactly, I knew that was gonna be the next thing but you looking at demographic levels of people and where they come from and you might say that certain cultures and certain areas (even within the UK) so like my example earlier of white middle-aged males in SMALL RURAL villages taking information about Muslims and using it to turn and hate against them. That's a similar thing to what you're getting at now I think.

RESEARCHER: OK I think we're getting a bit off track again. Going back to social media, I want to direct to you M5 because you've not said anything for QUITE some time...

ALL: (LAUGHING)

RESEARCHER: We started talking about social media. What's your overall views? Which social media do you believe is preferred by young people and why?

M5: I don't really look at news and social media.

RESEARCHER: Just social media in general

M5: If I had to choose it would be Facebook. Purely because that's what's being used most. I prefer Facebook for videos for gaming. I wouldn't look for news on YouTube.

RESEARCHER: What about news about Gaming?

M5: Hmmmm

M3: To be honest, Twitter I think is a bit better.

ALL: (INAUDIBLE AGREEMENT)

M3: Twitter's a LOT easier because you can actually you can type, it's got like a SEARCH thing SPORTS news GAMING news

M5: Yeah but...

ALL: (INAUDIBLE DISCUSSION AS ALL TALK AT ONCE)

M5: If I use Facebook, I would look for videos ON Facebook on news or gaming

RESEARCHER: Ok if we take news out altogether, which do we think is the most popular social media platform for your generation?

F1: Facebook

M1: I think it comes down to personal preference and what it.... I DON'T have Twitter. I don't even have an account. Whereas I know a lot of people that love Twitter and say it's the best thing ever.

RESEARCHER: What would be your personal preference?

M1: (thinks) I like YouTube and Facebook cos there's a lot of videos, a lot of informative videos and they're my two preferences.

F2: I'm using YouTube more cos you don't have to do an account or a channel. You can just go and search for anything BUT Facebook. You've got to do an account and I don't want to have an account on Facebook so I prefer YouTube.

RESEARCHER: Why don't you want an account on Facebook?

F2: I just (.1) cos I have to stay like approving things and my news and stuff so I prefer Twitter.

M3: Yeah you can stay MORE private sort of sense. With Facebook you can see like everyone posting things all the time saying "I'm here. I'm here, I'm here"

ALL: (LAUGHING)

M3: And you're like (LAUGHING)

M4: Or Instagram

M2: I think that's a good point cos the way social media is, it's all about self. Like news is about other things that are going on and I don't think that

F1: MMMM yeah

M2: I don't think (.) I think the way young people are, I think it's around social media and it's all about yourself so...

F1: Yeah if it affects you, then you care about it

M2: It's like xxxx with his snapchat. It's all about stories in his life

M1: Yeah it's false as well. That's errr it's a false level of (.1) there's a lot of things recently where people have faked going on holidays....

F1, F2 AND M5: Yeah yeah

M1: People who have a lot of followers HAVE faked going to festivals and on holidays just to PROVE how much you can manipulate pictures...

F2: And this is sometimes how the news does as well how the (.1) It makes you have a picture in your mind for example for Muslims as you said before, it makes you imagine a picture that might cause wars and like really negative things and in reality it's not the same as what we read or what we see on the news. It's really different the reality.

M2: You can't really argue with extreme things though can you?

M1: No but it can be, as daft as it sounds you can have a Muslim farm who lives in the middle of nowhere and he carries a gun because there might be wolves or bears around his sheep AS DAFT AS THAT MIGHT SOUND then you get a photographer taking a picture of that. Of a man stood in a field in the middle of nowhere and writer "Muslim man terrorises..."

M2: Equally you could have some random white chaps sat outside a pub and you could take a picture of him saying they're racist down the road...

M1: YEAH

F1: To be fair, when it was the London bombings there were pictures of a youth in front a blaze making it appear that he was the one who had caused the blaze and that was on all the newspapers

BEM: Yeah and it's wrong

F2: He may have just been walking by (.2) a PICTURE is worth a thousand words

RESEARCHER: Going back – it's great that you're all expressing your attitudes and an almost complete mistrust for the news, but how would you classify the content that you see online? If you had to sort of put it into categories? You know we've talked about the Kardashians, we've talked about gaming; how would you classify each of those?

M1: In what sense?

RESEARCHER: What examples could you give me – so you would have politics, what would you put politics under?

M2: News

GROUP: (LOOKING UNCERTAIN REGARDING QUESTION)

RESEARCHER: What would you put under news? What kind of things could you put under news and can you give specifics?

M1: I'd put current affairs as in not so much (.) not so much SHEER fact but STUFF that's happened so like wars. That is a current event, it's not a (.) THAT to me is news. Whereas new technologies and developments kind of fall into news but not so much for me personally but again I feel like some people would feel that would be classified as news. It's (.) I dunno, it's quite a broad spectrum of everything.

M2: I'd probably say anything that's happening now that will impact the future.

RESEARCHER: What like?

M2: Such as new technology that will impact (.) I dunno BREXIT if you know what I mean? And how and what the news on that is and how that's gonna effect US in the future, or you know (whispers) I dunno I'm trying to thin. WHEN Endgame comes out or something like that

F1: (LAUGHS)

RESEARCHER: Would you see that as news?

F1: Yeah

RESEARCHER: So things like films coming out

GROUP: ((INAUDIBLE TALKING OVER EACH OTHER))

F1: It's what's relevant to YOU it's like...

M4: It's stuff you want to know

F1: Yeah it's like Lucifer season four. I've been waiting for that for absolutely ages (LAUGHS) and I've now seen the trailer because it's come up on my news feed and everything and...

M2: you're excited? (LAUGHS)

F1: YEAH I'm excited yeah exactly. It's like the things that excite me. Like you get your TRADITIONAL as in the politics and wars and current affairs but then I think your interests, they now do tailor it to make it if it's new so like new game releases

M4: Entertainment

M2: You said you don't like the news because it's depressing

F1: It is

M2: But then you say that what's it called? Lucifer's coming out and you're like really excited about that...

F1: Well, that's the thing, it's what you classify as news

M2: So, you classify news as NOT Lucifer then? That's what you just said like

F1: Yeah, like you've got the traditional news like politics...

M2: But that's...

M3: It's saying like the traditional news, THAT'S depressing

GROUP: ((INAUDIBLE ALL SPEAK OVER EACH OTHER))

RESEARCHER: What about the Kardashians? News or not news

GROUP: (ALL SPEAK AT ONCE)

F1: CELEBRITY NEWS

M1: But then you'd argue it's entertainment news. I mean I don't personally agree that they are news but some people are very put the case across strongly that they're entertainment news.

M2: Yeah, I suppose you can class it the same as football for some people. It's entertainment news.

M3: Yeah, so there's like sports news. You've got different brackets for different news

M4: It's like genres

M1: It's not a specific term news. It's very individual to every person would call it something else. Someone might believe that any bit of information they absorb is news whereas others might...

M2: New and updated information

M1: Yeah, others might look (.1) and classify news as BBC news, the guardian, the sun and anything outside of that is then NOT news

RESEARCHER: What would you think about your generation then? What do YOU think they class as news as such?

M1: It's SUCH a broad question. It's SO (I can't think of the word). It's DOWN to interpretation. It's MASSIVELY down to personal interpretation.

M4: Basically, what could affect the person

GROUP: (ALL MAKE VARIOUS SOUNDS OF AGREEMENT)

M4: Like people in America, I don't think they care about Brexit.

M1: So, to them it's not news

F1: Unless they're working in England

M1: I think news is something that effect you. To put a definition on it, it's a piece of new and relevant information that has a personal effect on your life and wellbeing. I think to put a definition to what news is.

M5: Yeah

M2: When does news become history then? You know what I mean

M1: I guess when it's happened

M2: Yeah, but you're saying its news then it's something that's new to you. Something could've happened like TEN years ago. I mean it's still news to you

M1: BUT let's say they've found something out about the second world war that was so (.1) say Hitler was still alive for another fifty years.

GROUP LAUGH TOGETHER

M1: And they found...

F1: THAT's a conspiracy theory (LAUGHS)

M1: THEY found that out TODAY. THAT would then be NEW and RELEVANT information because the information itself is new however the sources are old so that's how it adds...

M2: So, something that has happened in the past...

M1: Yeah, you could still make it...

M2: News has to be present or in the future

M1: Yeah so

M3: So, the news is something that they've pretty much just discovered?

M1: Yeah, whether the information's based on old knowledge that's already been there but BACK up with new STUDIES it's still news cos it's that thing about being new and PRESENT

M2: Yeah, something that's present

M1: PERSONALLY

RESEARCHER: So are there any sources for news on social media or elsewhere that you would trust more than others?

M1: No

F1: No

RESEARCHER: Why?

M3: Everything has a sort of biased towards them. Like they're "oh I don't really like them so I'm gonna write this article about them" whereas the next thing you know, they write something else, but you agree with it cos it's something you've read up on...

M1: There isn't a SINGLE news provider that I would say I swear by

M3: Yeah

M2: But you're gonna trust BBC news over Fred

M1: Yeah obviously that's a bit of an extreme example of your mate down the road and BBC news but I'm talking about on a comparison level of say the Sun produced an article and he BBC news produced an article now, the sun haven't got a very valid reputation of production valid information but it

doesn't mean that I wouldn't like I'd completely disparage what they'd said. I'd STILL take it into account.

F2: Sometimes they try to do a propaganda or just try to (inaudible muttering) so that's like when I see something on the news for example of YouTube, I try to see all the other sources as well before I trust this. So, if I'm interested I try to open Twitter and open Facebook and open google like. I try to make sure that this reading is correct or...

RESEARCHER: Do you think that's the case with most people?

M2: I don't think so

M3: I don't think most people do that, no.

F2: If it's something that's important to me, I'll try to

M2: If it was important...

M3: Yeah, it depends if you're looking at, if it's something that you're interested in the YEAH you will but if it's not something you're really bothered by you just read the headline and you just like "oh right so that's happened..."

F1: Yeah, so like Notre-Dame, it came up on my phone cos I've got the BBC app on it and I was like "oh ok, it's on fire" and that's it like...

M3: You don't read so much into it

F1: No

RESEARCHER: Well, we've kind of covered the reliability quite in-depth, given everything you've said, how you believe more news outlets may engage more post-millennials like the BBC. You talked about an App...

F1: Yeah

RESEARCHER: How do you think they can engage people more?

M1: I don't think they ever will. I genuinely don't think they will. I think they're outdated.

M2: No I don't think (.1) I think as you get older and as you get a more structured life WITH a TV licence, I know it sounds ridiculous but the fact I'm in student accommodation, I don't have a TV licence, the amount of news that I miss out on

F1: Yeah yeah

M1: My reasoning behind it and if anyone disagrees, I don't think you'll hold back (gestures to M2)

GROUP: (LAUGHS)

M1: I think were the first generation to truly question any information we're given

M3: YEAH

M1: I think previous generations were told to do something and generally followed suit

M2: I don't think so. I think the older generation and the generation before that

M4: They didn't have this much access to information

M2: You've got people like...

F1: That's the thing, like newspapers were the only source

M4: Yeah, that's the only source of information you would've got

F1: So you had to take it and you'd grow up in a household where you'd just read the Express or the Mail or your grandparents would read the Times and that...

M1: And that was the information that was put in front of you

F1: And that was you had and then like M1 was saying you'd sit down and watch the news

M2: Yeah, but we weren't there when the news was being given, I mean like twenty years time, news is gonna be what we've been told and what's been classified as news is somebody's telling it, you know what I mean?

F1: Yeah

M1: NEWS will never disappear, that's not what I'm trying to say at all. When I say, I think (.) I probably worded it wrong in the first place. I THINK the big news channels, the likes of the BBC, the Guardian, the express, the Express, the sun – I feel they will become irrelevant because the information they are providing or the means they are providing information through, is outdated. I think they've tried to diversify into Apps and websites but they're still providing that SAME level of information just across a different platform. Whereas NOW (.) I know personally, I will get a piece of information from one place and PROBABLY never ever go back to that website again because you don't necessarily NEED to which is (.1) the AMOUNT of information and the AMOUNT of sources of information will eventually overrun these select individuals uuumm providers of information because they're not gonna meet the needs of everyone. When our generation get to very solid working ages and are questioning everything they say, people will eventually stop.

M2: But I think it's deeper than that. I think at our age your news to the world and everything else and everyone's quite introverted and thinking about themselves and actually when you get older, you start to look outwards and start to be more interested in the world and so I think maybe at our age, you can't make a comment like that.

RESEARCHER: Do you think people your age may become more loyal to certain outlets as they get older?

M4: Probably not

M1: I personally don't think...

RESEARCHER: Is there anything you think they could do to entice people or perhaps engage them more?

M1: No because they're outdated

M4: And also, most of them are just businesses and they also want to make money.

F1: Yeah

M4: So instead of more reliable news, they would go for the more clicks or the...

M1: You see my dad only reads BBC news, that's all he reads. He'll read the BBC news, he never reads any other news channel whereas when I read about something, I read everywhere. I don't search BBC then search the topic. I search the topic STRAIGHT away on google.

RESEARCHER: So do you believe it's more the stigma attached to the actual news outlets? That they're outdated and people are looking for news ones because of their reputation?

M4: It's also what they've done in the past (.2) Maybe they've given news before that's not true?

M2: It's quite interesting because obviously you've (GESTURES TO M4) lived in Qatar most of your life – what's the news like there? I mean is it different to what it's like here?

M4: Usually, I just go on line so (ALL LAUGHING) it's still the same for me

RESEARCHER: So thank you for everything. Is there anything we haven't covered that you think we should?

GROUP: (ALL AGREE EVERYTHING WAS COVERED)

A.2 Focus Group 2 Transcript

Focus Group 2 Transcript

Date: 30th April 2019

Participants: Males 1 (M1) Females 5 (F1, F2, F3, F4, F5) - F2, M1, F3, F1, F4, F5. F1

Duration: 33'09"

RESEARCHER: This is an initial study into how post-millennials are accessing and defining the news. Not much has been done in this area. It's hoped this research will help to guide news outlets in how they should be catering for future audiences. This is a focus group. Ideally, I'd like you to speak to each other about what you define as news and where you access it. I want your views, not mine, so I'll take as little part as possible. I'm not testing you for right or wrong answers – I've got some broad questions to get the ball rolling or put things back on track. You can say as much or little as you like, but I may interject if someone doesn't seem to be getting the opportunity to speak; other than that, I'll leave it to you. The conversation's

being recorded so I may transcribe it later. I'll also be taking notes just to make it easier to identify who says what when listening back. I'll be the only person to listen to the recording and nobody will be named in the transcript. The results will be written up and published in my thesis and also at a conference – again nobody will be identified. Any questions? You can always ask later if you wish. You may also withdraw from the study at any time. Is everyone happy for the recording to go ahead?

PARTICIPANTS TOGETHER: Nod indicating agreement.

RESEARCHER: Let's just introduce ourselves and maybe give an interesting fact – doesn't matter if you can't think of one off the top of your head, it can just be about where you're from or studying.

INTRODUCTIONS GIVEN AND PARTICIPANTS RELAX

RESEARCHER: Now don't worry if you have different views on anything or disagree with something said; all contributions are valuable. Again, try to speak to each other rather than me. Now, how often do you think people in your age group pick up a newspaper.

F2: Hardly ever (.) I used to when I was really young but... never now.

M1: It's like usually old people, like middle aged people that I see on the train pick up newspaper. Other than that I don't really see anyone of my age just pick up a newspaper.

F4: Sometimes I do if I'm on the bus or like the train but apart from that (.) I wouldn't. I like glance at it when I see them in work but I wouldn't (trailing off inaudible)

F5: It's only if I'm bored that I'll like flick through one if it's there but I wouldn't go out and get one myself so...

F1: Yeah I've never brought one but I've always seen grandparents having them and stuff.

(5 min 48)

RESEARCHER: So why do you think it is that you guys don't...

F3: Well... I've seen a few times for example, even for free newspapers I check just for curiosity, but I never sort of read through (LAUGHS) I was just sort of reading the title like ah ok done. Errrm well I guess we just live in a very fast world and everything is moving and we like try to spend our time in more (.) to read more things that actually interest us. I think I only read news articles when I have to do some research for an essay and stuff like that.

F2: I ... I don't read newspapers. I try to avoid newspapers and news if I'm honest. I'm one of those awful people who don't know what's going on until someone says oh you should read about this and I'm like oh ok.

RESEARCHER: Why do you try to avoid it?

F2: Makes me depressed because there's a lot of crappy things going on

F3: Yeah

F2: Not a ray of sunshine

RESEARCHER: So newspapers equal depression?

F2: Yeah (LAUGHS)

F3: I absolutely agree. There are so many things you see and I think we just don't wanna know.

RESEARCHER: (DIRECTING TO OTHER PARTICIPANTS) – What about you guys? Why do you think people of your generation are maybe not picking up a newspaper?

F4: It is quite depressing. Most stories like if there are good stories, they're right at the back. They're not gonna be at the front page type thing so... it isn't very cheerful. It makes you feel.... yeah a bit down.

M1: Yeah I also think like that a lot news they can easily access them through social media or like the internet and I think (.) personally I think I'm into more pop culture so there's like this news outlet call complex and um they have kind of a bit of everything and they have like categories from lifestyle, sport um culture so they really just like try and make sure they have like the biggest news out there and they like post it on the internet website so yeah...

F3: Yeah most of the things I'll read maybe they are breaking news but I also read them online or just some people share it then it's something they'll go on and you'll pick it up otherwise I don't even like, even at some point I was um very interested obviously being from Romania and Turkey there were a lot of political stuff going on and I had to be interested but there were so many things that they were not even close to the reality so that makes you even more angry and you don't want to read it just...

F2: MMMM

RESEARCHER: So you kind of touched on it (directed at M1) about the internet. How do you think most people use the internet? What do you use it for?

F2: Erm I think we literally look for what we want to look for it's like you can either google what you want, or you might have a specific if you're interested in the news or whatnot. Erm we just look for what we want you don't just go this is what we're meant to do pick up a newspaper. It's not traditional.

F1: I think it's what you're interested in so my boyfriend like always gets the sports news alerts on his phone like he wouldn't get them for everyday news if that makes sense? So It's down to interest I think.

M1: So I think in terms of big news it's hard to like get away from um I guess sort of like everywhere on social media. If it's like trending on Twitter, it's like every post is about it on like Instagram and like an example would be like the Notre-Dame so you sort of see that like everywhere online and yeah...

F3: We sometimes found that faster it was happening through social media errr we'd just get a notification and then your life and you'd see it for real happening so it's just (.) more easier.

RESEARCHER: So would you say that's how most people are accessing the news then?

F3: Most young people yes because we're literally every day every minute with a phone in our hands so even if you wanna getaway you'll see it (LAUGHS).

F2: I agree. It's like when I was told about the Notre Dame for example, my sister told me and when I told you guys in the group chat it was like have you seen this? We were (INAUDIBLE) for a month.

F3: Yeah, I literally saw someone had it online live video cos I have friends everywhere so I have someone who lives in Paris he was just filming it live so I got to some....

F4: Well, the New Zealand gunmen did that didn't they? Posted it straight live to Facebook.

F3: Yeah

F4: You know that story?

F3: Yeah (laughs)

F2: I don't. I just know it's happened.

RESEARCHER: So why do you think you're accessing it on social media mostly then?

F2: Erm because you're seeing it from people you want to see I from instead of people who would either blow it out of proportion or have other remarks and branch off and make a snowball effect on something. You know where it's coming from.

F1: It's just really easy and accessible too. Your phone is in your hand or back pocket at all times so it's just there. You don't have to go out and find it. It's right next to you.

F3: Yeah, I guess it's just easier to like have a conversation about what's happening and see it rather than to read an old boring article.

F4: MMMM and you can just share it to your friends instantly. You don't have to that oh go and look at this newspaper or borrow my newspaper you just send them the link and they can just instantly see it just as you can.

F1: I think it's easy cos Twitter has like moments so straight away you can see the news and it's always updating whereas with the newspapers like that's the news and it's like not updated until the next day or when you watch the news later on.

F2: (Mumbles agreement)

RESEARCHER: So, kind of old news?

F1: Yeah

F3: Yeah, and we'll spend our time talking with friends about anything so obviously we'll share news as well.

F2: I think that's the thing though – we're talking more about it as oppose to sitting back and reading something not talking. We're actually engaging.

F3: Yeah

F2: And exploring other people's viewpoints.

F3: That's a good point. We're engaging in actual things and we see more opinions about the matter. It makes me feel like we have a voice kind of thing and if there are really bad things happening erm then protests happen as well because people learn that we can be hurt so....

RESEARCHER: Ok so how is social media useful? You touched on the interactivity of it and how you can actually physical get involved in the news so as post millennials, what do you think people mostly use social media for?

F3: Everything

EVERYONE: (LAUGHS)

F3: We literally use... I personally use it for everything even shopping, even news of friends, family, everything.

F2: I'm not that much on social media anymore because I like to turn off from the world when I'm at home. I'm like that's it work errr otherwise you know you get people who review their worth you know on likes on a selfie and it's just not worth it so just unplug.

F3: Yeah I'm not saying only about social media, I'm saying about everything cos if we need to do some research we find it easier to go on internet than to a library. I find it like that and if I want to buy something I maybe don't have time to go look for it but I still try to look to internet and ask my friends and put posts on social media what do you think about this product or you know ask questions. Yeah we can use it easier that way...

F1: I think primarily I use social media just to sort of communicate with people I don't see very often like people back home and stuff but um (1) it's secondary use is just a timewaster like if you're waiting for the past to boil, you're just scrolling through Facebook cos you've got nothing else to do.

RESEARCHER: Is that when you'd kind of come across news stories as well?

F1: Yeah, that's when I'd find it. I wouldn't go out and look for it specifically it's only when I've got nothing else to do.

RESEARCHER: Anything else to add anybody?

F3: I do travel a lot, and I made a lot of friends from all sorts of corners of the world so it's so good to have social media erm to keep in touch with them. It's just amazing and you learn stuff about other people's lives and culture not exactly envious because oh he's got a new car or something but just be happy for their life and share things.

RESEARCHER: What's your favourite social media that you use? If you had to pick, which is the one you use the most and why?

M1: Erm probably Instagram because it's just a lot easier. I think everything makes it a lot simpler for posting like and image rather than like status updates and stuff like that. It's just easier to read and easier to just like I guess just view and more accessible.

F1: Yeah, the same for me, Instagram yeah, I use them also because you can err follow people's daily life or stories also posts and message them and it has everything yeah on it.

F4: Erm I think Twitter. I've had it the longest and it's the platform where people share their views the most and (INAUDIBLE) news and stuff. It's got so many different things. I don't (INAUDIBLE TRAILING OFF).

F1: I think I probably use Facebook the most. I have Instagram to sort of just follow celebrities and stuff but Facebook I've actually got people I know - family members and everything so it's more important to me.

RESEARCHER: More personal?

F1: Yeah

F5: I'd say like Facebook messenger because when I'm like here and not at home, I can talk to my family and also my friends and we can discuss work and just general things as well so...

F3: Like you say, Instagram you can also, you follow your interests not only people so what you're passionate about, what you'd like to see and also news just through a simple hashtag you can find pretty much anything you wanna know about.

F2: Erm messenger again because I like to just talk to the people I want to talk to (LAUGHS)

RESEARCHER: What about YouTube though? Do you ever use that for finding out things?

F2: Erm yeah, I use it to learn how to cook things because I'm interested in cheffing cuisine, not that I can cook any of it but I want to.

ALL: (LAUGH)

F3: Erm I like some TV shows I follow like erm Ellen or something like that and sometimes you just watch the news.

M1: Erm I think the trending section plays a huge role in it because you see what some like people view the most and you can just scroll through like the news that is like important to that day or that week and the yeah so it's just easier to access really.

F5: I just use for entertainment like if I'm down or wanna smile or laugh at something. That's all I really use it for.

F3: Yeah, like I watch the Ellen show or I watch the Massive Holes of you know funny videos you know ...

F2: (Interrupts) Things that are gonna make us happy like memes and Vimes.

F3: Yeah, for music, I have entire playlists of music but I really don't like to bother to have on phone download it. I just have it on YouTube.

RESEARCHER: If you had to classify the content that you see online and group it into certain categories, how would you do that?

F3: Well, I guess it's up to you so....

RESEARCHER: So, if we talk about it in relation to social media, you (turns to F2), spoke about Vimes?

F2: They're kind of like jokey things that you share with your mates like oh that's made me chuckle, here you go.

RESEACHER: Can they be a way of informing you of what's going on?

F2: Erm I sure you could do. I'm sure there was a meme of like Theresa May in a field of wheat (LAUGHS)

ALL: (LAUGH)

F2: But that's all I know in terms of politics and memes.

RESEARCHER: Do you think memes could be used more in news?

F2: It could be more fun and engaging. We could relate to it in a way that's like Oh yeah ok, you've got my attention, you're on my level instead of just talking at someone and telling them and lecturing them like you need to do this – yes but why?

RESEARCHER: I suppose there are puns on newspapers.

F2: (INTERUPTS) Yeah that's very old-fashioned humour.

RESEARCHER: SO, could memes take over from puns?

F1: Yeah, memes are going to appeal to people that are younger than us because it's more appealing to them. If they see a meme, they may be able to like research what it's about.

F2: Yeah

RESEARCHER: So, things like the Kardashians and...

F2: (INTERUPTS) Waste of time

ALL: (LAUGH)

RESEARCHER: If you had to say what kind of news it was

F3: (INTERUPTS) Well I suppose because we do use social media, we do follow what we want can we really classify that when we follow someone or unfollow? Sometimes yeah you have some friends, and they do share and talk about it but yeah you do protect yourself to.

RESEARCHER: So, what kind of things would you class as news?

ALL: (SPEAK AT ONCE)

F2: (INAUDIBLE) because back in the day, you'd done something and now you've got celebrities like Kim Kardashian who just has a ginormous bottom

ALL: (LAUGHS)

F4: And then you get like celebrities that... (INAUDIBLE)

ALL: (INAUDIBLE SOUNDS OF AGREEMENT – ALL SPEAK AT ONCE)

F4: In a way, it all fits into the same sort of category so...

F3: I would say news is everything that's new but it's also selected by what's important to us because maybe (3) because we are all different, so for everyone it's different, it means something different news.

F2: It would be nice if there was like a recommended section for you to read because then I'm not interested in sports. I don't want to hear who scored or threw it. I want to read what I want to read and that's it.

F3: Yeah, I guess we'll be like how I would see it would be like on a west side you know all this um links are and you can have like sport for you erm famous people or you know politics.

RESEARCHER: Do you think people would go to those websites or do you think it's easier if you're on social media and it just flashes up because it's got your algorithms, like you said, things that will interest you. The longer you look at certain news stories, the higher it will come up in your priority so those stories will automatically come through to you.

F2: If I knew that one place was good for one specific thing, I'd go to that place. But if it's just gonna be like vague or bias or just um (.1) you can hear that it's from someone who's got a different viewpoint and too narrow minded, then I'm not gonna read it, I'm gonna be like but you haven't explored these. I think that's like why it puts me off sometimes as well. The fact that I think we need a more diverse range of writers to actually explore different topics.

RESEARCHER: Do you trust what you read? When you're on social media and you get these news stories. Do you necessarily trust them or would you look into it more?

M1: Erm I think if there's like big events definitely look into it more because you wanna see different articles what different people are saying and different views. But for something like, that's sort of like only little then you'd sort of just like trust it I guess.

F4: I guess if you were interested in it, like the Notre Dame fire like I saw that and I looked into it more than sometimes things pop up on your phone and like the bad news and you just kind of swipe it away cos it doesn't interest you.

F3: Yeah erm sometimes erm I will wait for some news that interest you like I forward news about like what new buildings there are and new innovation and stuff like that yes that's the news you wanna go for it but otherwise you might see something about coalition (LAUGHS) or something like that you just don't believe it, you don't bother to read.

F1: I think a lot of it depends if it's local news or worldwide news. So, if it was local news, I probably wouldn't bother to research it but if it's worldwide then I'd probably...

RESEARCHER: Do you find it reliable though?

F1: No. If it's on a few different like say it's like on Facebook and then Instagram, then I'd probably be like that's...

F3: (INTERUPTS) I think it depends errr on what kind of website you find it. I mean if you find it on the guardian, then it's probably true but if you find it on an unknown named website then probably don't (LAUGHS)

F2: I just think things snowball. So the whole Ebola thing for example, we don't hear anything about it once it was cured, it was just mass panic beforehand and I don't see the point. I feel like the way they use words and portray information needs to be more not controlled but more responsible so that things don't get out of hand because the thing about ISIS as well, I had to convince a guy that this woman in a burqa wasn't gonna bomb him and it's just like ridiculous I'm like she's just doing her shopping leave he be.

F3: Yeah I feel it's not just a question if we believe or not it's just like they do form our own opinion about kind of everything so we maybe see the news in two different websites and then you just form your opinion, discuss it with your friends maybe about it.

F2: Yeah I do think people need to be more informed, they definitely do, because um carrying on from what I said about ISIS, there was a guy saying ooo look at that guy with a curtain on his head and I was like he's a Seek he's not even Muslim so...

F1: I think there's lots of scare mongering

F2: Yeah

F1: Especially with black politics

F5: I don't look into anything anywhere near as much as I should. If I see it, I just sort of think ok unless it interests me and then I'll ask someone that I know personally but I don't really go on and research it anymore which isn't good.

F3: I guess if it doesn't affect you demographically then you don't really care.

F2: Mmmm

RESEARCHER: Are there any sources, you kind of touched on it before that you'd kind of trust the Guardian more than other websites.

F3: Yeah exactly

RESEARCHER: Are there any news outlets that you particularly trust more than others?

F1: Definitely not the sun.

F2: Yeah the sun's full of crap.

F3: So BBC, CNN, they are kind of world wide and you know they're not just simple people writing those things (LAUGHS) and usually they will not post anything ridiculous anyway so...

RESEARCHER: What do you mean by simple people?

F3: Yeah I mean people that don't really have taken a profession out of broadcasting. Just do it, you know, for fun (LAUGHS).

F2: The kind of keyboard warrior

F3: Yeah the kind of bloggers you know

RESEARCHER: Anything else to add? Any other websites or outlets?

M1: It's called Complex, I think it's just a US based but they sort of touch on what's interesting to me so like pop culture and stuff like that and when they do like have posts on Instagram, usually at the comments section, they'll like have these debates and then you can sort of see like different views and opinions on it and then you can I guess just generally have your own view as well so yeah...

RESEARCHER: So you like the interaction of the news?

M1: Yeah definitely

RESEARCHER: Given everything that you guys have said with regards to the news, how do you think outlets can engage more young people?

F5: Like the images they use and the way they word the headlines so they might capture my attention. Like if they use big words that I don't understand then I'm not gonna...

F2: Yeah I think for example, they need to name people properly. Not this famous footballer's wife has done this – no she's got a name and just to be more respectful and to the point and to be concise.

F3: I guess, for example, when I look into (INAUDIBLE) they seem very very serious I guess. If they would put something more like fun and more

interaction maybe it invite more young people on TV, more things that actually interest us not or up I know cos you usually see people over thirty-five/ forty on TV so for a young people they don't always walk into that. I would like to see something probably from someone my age having an opinion on something or as well someone from my age not only from my age (LAUGHS).

F4: I think like F5 said, just make it more catchy and like when it pops up on your phone it not have like big words again.

M1: Um I think it should like have news that has more of a like global appeal that like have a bigger impact rather than some a celebrity does, something that does. I think it's more important to like have like news that appeals to everyone and that everyone can sort of relate to so yeah.

RESREACHER: Is there anything you think we should cover whilst we're here?

F3: Yeah maybe they should also post things like positive ones like people rescuing erm or doing good stuff or animals or not only that we destroy the... cos sometime you now I see a lot of social media saying that we destroy our planet then we do that best but we maybe also try to show what we're trying to do and you know humanity at its best not only at its worst.

F2: Yeah maybe some ideas on how you can help and what charities to support and things like that because it's very much as you say sad sad sad and there's not the flip side of it, it's just...

F3: Yeah and it be indicative because like people there are many people that they probably do something good but they don't even know what is out there and why they should do it.

F5: The only thing I wish I knew more about is politics because I never know what to trust when it comes to politics. I don't know anywhere near as much as I should do for someone that can actually vote now. I know barely anything.

RESEARCHER: Does that deter you from voting?

F5: Yeah, yeah I should think it does.

F2: I can only speak to a few people about voting because different people if they say I think this they're gonna bit your head off so I find it...

F5: (INTERUPTS) It'd be good if there was somewhere you could like read about politics without it being biased because everyone's just biased about it and you don't know what to trust.

F3: I guess that's why sometimes we like to read and like what people are saying about it and to read the article.

F1: It'd be nice with politics, because it's hard to read, if they sort of dumbbed it down a bit so we understood it whereas the (INAUDIBLE) stuff I don't understand. When I try to research it, I still don't understand so it'd be nice if they did like bullets points of like their agenda or whatever their focus on because I don't remember like what the Conservatives were focussed on or whatever.

F2: I'd like the bullet points but to then have them expand on the bullet points and where they'd hope that would lead us because when people say erm for example, free uni, how and where like is the money gonna come from? The outline of that plan, and the NHS yeah.

Appendix B

Survey, Ethical Approval and Kruskal-Wallis Data

B.1: Copy of Survey Issued to Respondents

NB: The survey may also be accessed online via the following link:
<https://forms.gle/KvVKQBdfoa1R65d77>

07/01/2025, 17:54 Post-millennial news consumption

Post-millennial news consumption

This research is investigating how post-millennials or generation Z consume news. Specifically, it aims to understand frequent habits regarding reading and sharing news along with underlying attitudes to the information received. Respondents of the questionnaire will be required to complete an anonymous questionnaire. Participation is completely voluntary and participants may withdraw from the research at any time without prejudice, now or in the future. All data will be stored on encrypted files and will be destroyed once no longer required. No personal information will be distributed to third parties. The results will be shared in the form of academic articles, PhD Thesis, conferences and other related academic publications. For any further information or should you wish to raise any concerns, please contact the researcher, Beth Wood at b.wood@derby.ac.uk or the University of Derby Research Office at pgstudentoffice@derby.ac.uk.

* Indicates required question

Background Information

1. Please provide the last four digits of your mobile number - this is so we may trace your responses should you wish to withdraw from the study. *

07/01/2025, 17:54 Post-millennial news consumption

2. 1) Where do you currently live? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Scotland
☐ Northern Ireland
☐ Wales
☐ North East
☐ North West
☐ Yorkshire and the Humber
☐ West Midlands
☐ East Midlands
☐ South West
☐ South East
☐ East of England
☐ Greater London
☐ Outside of the UK

3. 2) What is your educational background? Please select only your highest qualification that you have either achieved or currently working to achieve. *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Level 1 (GCSE's grade 1-4/G-D or equivalent)
☐ Level 2 (GCSE's grade 4-9/ C-A* or equivalent)
☐ Level 3 (A Levels or equivalent)
☐ Level 4 (HNC/ Higher Apprenticeships or equivalent awards)
☐ Level 5 (Foundation Degree or equivalent)
☐ Level 6 (Bachelor's Degree or equivalent)
☐ Level 7 (Master's Degree or equivalent)
☐ Level 8 (Doctorate/PhD)

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<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/4B8Jd8Wc1Y58K7jpuAdmTYacJNNW1gJLk7Dk7wC3p4uIdHf8tmgp> 2/25

07/01/2023, 17:34 Post lockdown survey completion 4. 3) What would be the background of the highest earner in your immediate family? (Eg mother/ father/ carer's profession)? Mark only one oval. ☐ A – Higher managerial, administrative, professional e.g. Chief exec, senior civil servant, surgeon. ☐ B – Intermediate managerial, administrative, professional e.g. bank manager, teacher. ☐ C1 – Supervisory, clerical, junior managerial e.g. shop floor supervisor, bank clerk, sales person. ☐ C2 – Skilled manual workers e.g. electrician, carpenter. ☐ D – Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers e.g. assembly line worker, refuse collector, messenger. ☐ E – Casual labourers, pensioners, unemployed e.g. pensioners without private pensions and anyone living on basic benefits. Before Lockdown The following questions aim to look at your media consumption before the UK underwent lockdown. Please try to reflect back as much as possible but do not dwell on the questions for long. https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1dRjBdWcYY58K7jpuAduTYRuCjNNW1qLjDz7D0wC1p4edIdHttago 5/25	07/01/2023, 17:34 Post lockdown survey completion 5. 4) Before lockdown, which social media did you use? (You may select more than one) Tick all that apply ☐ Facebook ☐ Twitter ☐ Youtube ☐ Instagram ☐ Snapchat ☐ WhatsApp ☐ Tik Tok ☐ Tumblr ☐ LinkedIn ☐ Reddit ☐ Telegram ☐ Viber ☐ None ☐ Other: _____ https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1dRjBdWcYY58K7jpuAduTYRuCjNNW1qLjDz7D0wC1p4edIdHttago 6/25
07/01/2023, 17:34 Post lockdown survey completion 6. 5) Before lockdown, which social media did you consider you used the most? * Mark only one oval. ☐ Facebook ☐ Twitter ☐ Youtube ☐ Instagram ☐ Snapchat ☐ WhatsApp ☐ Tik Tok ☐ Tumblr ☐ LinkedIn ☐ Reddit ☐ Telegram ☐ Viber ☐ Mocospace ☐ Other ☐ None https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1dRjBdWcYY58K7jpuAduTYRuCjNNW1qLjDz7D0wC1p4edIdHttago 5/25	07/01/2023, 17:34 Post lockdown survey completion 7. 6) Before lockdown, which type of story were you most interested in? (You may select more than one) Tick all that apply ☐ Celebrity stories ☐ Entertainment stories ☐ Bad news stories ☐ Good news stories ☐ Stories which are relevant to you specifically ☐ Political stories ☐ Medical or Science stories ☐ Transport stories ☐ Wellbeing stories ☐ Technology stories ☐ Sport Stories ☐ Other: _____ 8. 7) Before lockdown, what sort of content would you share/retweet? (You may select more than one) Tick all that apply ☐ Celebrity stories ☐ Entertainment stories ☐ Bad news stories ☐ Good news stories ☐ Stories which are relevant to you specifically ☐ Political stories ☐ Medical and Science stories ☐ Wellbeing stories ☐ Memes ☐ Quizzes ☐ GIFs ☐ Technology Stories ☐ Sport stories ☐ I don't share stories ☐ Other: _____ https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1dRjBdWcYY58K7jpuAduTYRuCjNNW1qLjDz7D0wC1p4edIdHttago 6/25

07/01/2021, 17:54 Post-national news consumption

9. 8) Before lockdown, how often did you comment on content which you read online? (This includes social media, a news organisation's websites and other online outlets such as blogs) *

Mark only one oval.

☐ More than once a day

☐ Daily

☐ Weekly

☐ Monthly

☐ Never

10. 9) Before lockdown, to what degree did you trust the content you accessed? Please give your first answer and do not dwell on the question for long. *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Extremely trusting

☐ Somewhat trusting

☐ Neutral

☐ Not very trusting

☐ Extremely not trusting

11. 10) Before lockdown, how often did you access the news? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ More than once a day

☐ Daily

☐ Weekly

☐ Monthly

☐ Never

07/01/2021, 17:54 Post-national news consumption

12. 11) Before lockdown, how much of the content that you viewed on social media did you consider news? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ All

☐ Most

☐ Some

☐ None

13. 14) Before lockdown, to what degree did you trust the news that you accessed through through social media? Please give your first answer and do not dwell on the question for long. *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Extremely trusting

☐ Somewhat trusting

☐ Neutral

☐ Not very trusting

☐ Extremely not trusting

☐ I don't access news through this outlet

14. 12) Before lockdown, how often did you access the news through TV? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ More than once a day

☐ Daily

☐ Weekly

☐ Monthly

☐ Never

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<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1d8Rd8WvYV58C7jocAdstYBaCvNNW1gLDx7D0xnc5p4vdd4rttngs> 8/25

07/01/2021, 17:54 Post-national news consumption

15. 13) Before lockdown, what channel would you tend to go to for your TV news eg BBC, ITV, SKY etc? If none, please state N/A *

16. 14) Before lockdown, to what degree did you trust the news that you accessed through TV? Please give your first answer and do not dwell on the question for long. *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Extremely trusting

☐ Somewhat trusting

☐ Neutral

☐ Not very trusting

☐ Extremely not trusting

☐ I don't access news through this outlet

17. 15) Before lockdown, how often did you access news through radio? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ More than once a day

☐ Daily

☐ Weekly

☐ Monthly

☐ Never

07/01/2021, 17:54 Post-national news consumption

18. 16) Before lockdown, to what degree did you trust the news you accessed through radio? Please give your first answer and do not dwell on the question for long. *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Extremely trusting

☐ Somewhat trusting

☐ Neutral

☐ Not very trusting

☐ Extremely not trusting

☐ I don't access news through this outlet

19. 17) Before lockdown, how often did you access news through printed newspapers or magazines? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ More than once a day

☐ Daily

☐ Weekly

☐ Monthly

☐ Never

20. 18) Before lockdown, what were the printed newspapers/ magazines you tended to read? If none, please state N/A. *

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<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1d8Rd8WvYV58C7jocAdstYBaCvNNW1gLDx7D0xnc5p4vdd4rttngs> 10/25

07/01/2023, 17:34 Post-referendum news consumption 21. 19) Before lockdown, to what degree did you trust the news you accessed through printed newspapers and magazines? Please give your first answer and do not dwell on the question for long. Mark only one oval. ☐ Extremely trusting ☐ Somewhat trusting ☐ Neutral ☐ Not very trusting ☐ Extremely not trusting ☐ I don't access news through this outlet 22. 20) Before lockdown, how would you tend to access a news organisation's website eg BBC/The Independent Mark only one oval. ☐ I would go directly to the site ☐ I would click on a link I had seen on social media ☐ I would access it through the organisation's App ☐ I would access it through a generic news App on my phone ☐ I do not access any news organisation's website ☐ Other: _____ https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1d8Bd8WcYV380TjpuAdeY1RcANNW1qLdX7C0w0t4p4ndd8tngs 13/25	07/01/2023, 17:34 Post-referendum news consumption 23. 21) Before lockdown, how often did you access the news through a news organisation's website eg BBC/ The Independent etc? This may be through any of the methods stated in question 20. Mark only one oval. ☐ More than once a day ☐ Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Never 24. 22) Before lockdown, which news organisation's website would you tend to access eg BBC/Independent? If none, please state N/A _____ 25. 23) Before lockdown, to what degree did you trust the news you accessed through a news organisation's website eg the BBC/ The Independent? Please give your first answer and do not dwell on the question for long. Mark only one oval. ☐ Extremely trusting ☐ Somewhat trusting ☐ Neutral ☐ Not very trusting ☐ Extremely not trusting ☐ I don't access news through this outlet https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1d8Bd8WcYV380TjpuAdeY1RcANNW1qLdX7C0w0t4p4ndd8tngs 13/25
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07/01/2023, 17:34 Post-referendum news consumption 26. 24) Before lockdown, how often did you access news through other websites (including blogs)? Mark only one oval. ☐ More than once a day ☐ Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Never 27. 25) Before lockdown, to what degree did you trust the news you accessed through other websites (including blogs)? Mark only one oval. ☐ Extremely trusting ☐ Somewhat trusting ☐ Neutral ☐ Not very trusting ☐ Extremely not trusting ☐ I don't access news through this outlet 28. 26) Before lockdown, how often did you access news through news Apps on your phone/tablet? Please give your first answer and don't dwell on the question for long. Mark only one oval. ☐ More than once a day ☐ Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Never https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1d8Bd8WcYV380TjpuAdeY1RcANNW1qLdX7C0w0t4p4ndd8tngs 13/25	07/01/2023, 17:34 Post-referendum news consumption 29. 27) Before lockdown, to what degree did you trust the news you accessed through news Apps on your phone/tablet? Please give your first answer and don't dwell on the question for long. Mark only one oval. ☐ Extremely trusting ☐ Somewhat trusting ☐ Neutral ☐ Not very trusting ☐ Extremely not trusting ☐ I don't access news through this outlet 30. 28) Before lockdown, please state the News Apps on your phone/ tablet you were likely to use. If none please state N/A _____ 31. 29) Before lockdown, how often did you access news through social media? Mark only one oval. ☐ More than once a day ☐ Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Never https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1d8Bd8WcYV380TjpuAdeY1RcANNW1qLdX7C0w0t4p4ndd8tngs 14/25
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07/01/2025, 17:54 Post-mediated news consumption

32. 30) Before lockdown, which social media did you use the most to access the news? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Facebook

☐ Twitter

☐ Youtube

☐ Instagram

☐ Snapchat

☐ WhatsApp

☐ Tik Tok

☐ Tumblr

☐ LinkedIn

☐ Reddit

☐ Telegram

☐ Viber

☐ Mocospace

☐ Other: _____

33. 31) Before lockdown, to what degree did you trust the news you access through social media? Please give your first answer and don't dwell on the question for long. *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Extremely trusting

☐ Somewhat trusting

☐ Neutral

☐ Not very trusting

☐ Extremely not trusting

☐ I don't access news through this outlet

07/01/2025, 17:54 Post-mediated news consumption

34. 32) Before lockdown, to what degree did you trust the news you overall accessed? Please give your first answer and don't dwell on the question for too long. *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Extremely trusting

☐ Somewhat trusting

☐ Neutral

☐ Not very trusting

☐ Extremely not trusting

After Lockdown

The aim of this section is to explore what your news consumption is now like and if it has changed since Covid-19.

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07/01/2025, 17:54 Post-mediated news consumption

35. 33a) Since lockdown, which social media do you use the most? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Facebook

☐ Twitter

☐ Youtube

☐ Instagram

☐ Snapchat

☐ WhatsApp

☐ Tik Tok

☐ Tumblr

☐ LinkedIn

☐ Reddit

☐ Telegram

☐ Viber

☐ Mocospace

☐ Other

☐ None

☐ Option 16

36. 33b) Based on your previous answer, please briefly explain why you use this social media the most? *

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37. 34a) Since lockdown, where would you turn to for accurate information? (You may select more than one answer) *

Tick all that apply

☐ Facebook

☐ Twitter

☐ Youtube

☐ Instagram

☐ Snapchat

☐ WhatsApp

☐ Tik Tok

☐ Tumblr

☐ LinkedIn

☐ Reddit

☐ Telegram

☐ Viber

☐ Mocospace

☐ TV

☐ Radio

☐ Newspapers

☐ A news organisation's website (eg BBC/ The Independent)

☐ Other websites (including blogs)

☐ News Apps on phones/tablets

☐ Other

38. 34b) Considering your previous answer, please briefly explain why you value these sources for accurate information *

Overall Thinking

This section aims to explore your news consumption over time and how it may have changed/developed.

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<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1d8Jd89vYV3807jpuAdmY7RcCN5W1qLdLx7D0w0tup4sdf4tngs>

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07/01/2023, 17:54 Post-skillbased news consumption 39. 35) How often was the news accessed in your home when you were growing up? * Mark only one oval. ☐ More than once a day ☐ Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Never 40. 36) When growing up, how often was the news accessed through TV by your parents/guardians? * Mark only one oval. ☐ More than once a day ☐ Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Never 41. 37) Which TV news would your parents most likely watch eg BBC/ITV/Sky? If none, please state N/A * _____	07/01/2023, 17:54 Post-skillbased news consumption 42. 38) When growing up, how often was the news accessed through radio by your parents/guardians? * Mark only one oval. ☐ More than once a day ☐ Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Never 43. 39) When growing up, how often was the news accessed through printed newspapers or magazines by your parents/guardians? * Mark only one oval. ☐ More than one publication a day ☐ Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Never 44. 40) What were the printed newspaper/magazines your parents/guardians read? If none, please state N/A * _____
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1dR8dWvYY3807jpcAdatY3RcJNN9LqLX/TCwCtq4-ndofwtrng 19/25	https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1dR8dWvYY3807jpcAdatY3RcJNN9LqLX/TCwCtq4-ndofwtrng 20/25

07/01/2023, 17:54 Post-skillbased news consumption 39. 35) How often was the news accessed in your home when you were growing up? * Mark only one oval. ☐ More than once a day ☐ Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Never 40. 36) When growing up, how often was the news accessed through TV by your parents/guardians? * Mark only one oval. ☐ More than once a day ☐ Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Never 41. 37) Which TV news would your parents most likely watch eg BBC/ITV/Sky? If none, please state N/A * _____	07/01/2023, 17:54 Post-skillbased news consumption 42. 38) When growing up, how often was the news accessed through radio by your parents/guardians? * Mark only one oval. ☐ More than once a day ☐ Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Never 43. 39) When growing up, how often was the news accessed through printed newspapers or magazines by your parents/guardians? * Mark only one oval. ☐ More than one publication a day ☐ Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Never 44. 40) What were the printed newspaper/magazines your parents/guardians read? If none, please state N/A * _____
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07/04/2023, 17:34 Post-skillbased news consumption

45. 41) When growing up, how often was the news accessed through a news organisation's website (eg BBC/ Independent) by your parents/guardians? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ More than once a day

☐ Daily

☐ Weekly

☐ Monthly

☐ Never

46. 42) What were the news organisations' websites your parents/guardians would predominantly use? If none, please state N/A. *

47. 43) When growing up, how often did your parents/guardians access news through other websites (including blogs)? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ More than once a day

☐ Daily

☐ Weekly

☐ Monthly

☐ Never

07/04/2023, 17:34 Post-skillbased news consumption

48. 44) When growing up, how often did your parents/guardians access news through social media? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ More than once a day

☐ Daily

☐ Weekly

☐ Monthly

☐ Never

49. 45) To what degree do you believe your parents/guardians trusted the news they accessed? Please give your first answer and don't dwell on the question for long. *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Extremely trusting

☐ Somewhat trusting

☐ Neutral

☐ Not very trusting

☐ Extremely not trusting

50. 46) Since lockdown, do you feel you trust the news you access more or less than before? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Less

☐ More

☐ The same

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07/04/2023, 17:34 Post-skillbased news consumption

51. 47) If you trust the news less or more, please briefly give your reasons below. If your level of trust has remained the same, please put N/A as your answer. *

52. 48) Do you feel that you have sought news out more or less since lockdown? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Less

☐ More

☐ The same

53. 49) If you have sought the news less or more, please briefly give your reasons below. If your answer was the same, please put N/A as your answer. *

07/04/2023, 17:34 Post-skillbased news consumption

54. 50) What aspects of social media do you engage with the most? *

Tick all that apply.

☐ Your stories

☐ Newsfeed

☐ Tweets

☐ Snapchat Discover

☐ Short videos

☐ Photo images

☐ GIFs

☐ Memes

☐ Comments

☐ Other: _____

55. 51) How do you prefer information to be delivered to you? *

Tick all that apply.

☐ Mini video clips (up to 30 seconds)

☐ Short videos (under 5 minutes)

☐ Longer videos (5-10 minutes)

☐ Images (such as photographs or artist illustrations)

☐ In-depth articles

☐ Short, precise articles

☐ Mini audio/sound clips (up to 30 seconds)

☐ Short audio/sound clips (under 5 minutes)

☐ Longer audio/sound clips (5-10 minutes)

☐ Memes

☐ GIFs

☐ Infographics (images/computer graphics which present information or data quickly and clearly)

☐ Tweets

☐ Social media

☐ DM (Direct Message)

☐ Email

☐ Other: _____

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<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1d8Bd8WvYV38K7jpuAdu1YRcNNW1gLDx7C0wCtp4vddHn7ggs> 24/25

07/01/2025, 17:54

Post multilingual survey completion

Completion

Thank you for completing the questionnaire. Now you have finished, please check to confirm you are happy to submit your responses. You must then log on to the link below to return to Prolific <https://app.prolific.co/submissions/complete?cc=37003515>

56. Please confirm you are happy to submit your answers *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Yes, please submit my responses

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Google Forms

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B.2 Ethical Approval

Ethics ETH2324-0180: Bethany Wood

Date Created	11 Sep 2023
Date Submitted	12 Sep 2023
Date of last resubmission	23 Oct 2023
Date forwarded to committee	12 Sep 2023
Researcher	Bethany Wood
Student ID	
Category	Postgraduate research student
Supervisor	John Steel
Project	Digital Media Ecosystems: An analysis of post-millennial news consumption, its impact on evolving concepts and applications in journalism
College	College of Arts, Humanities and Education
Current status	Approved

Ethics application

Project information

Project title

Digital Media Ecosystems: An analysis of post-millennial news consumption, its impact on evolving concepts and applications in journalism. zs

What is the aim of your study?

This study identifies how post-millennials are predominantly accessing and consuming news analysing it from the perspective of the Social Shaping of Technology and Actor Network Theories. It will revise established journalistic concepts and contribute to the characterisation of the new generation from a Generational Theory perspective.

What are the objectives for your study?

O1: Identify how post-millennials define and perceive what is news.

O2: Recognise how post-millennials are consuming news and informing themselves from a generational perspective.

O3: Establish by which media platforms post-millennials are accessing and why.

O4: Critically analyse how the consumption of the news by 'Gen Z' is influencing the journalism industry.

O5: Critically evaluate the news consumption landscape related to the technological shifts from a social shaping of technology and Actor Network Theory perspective.

Are there any research partners (NOT including your supervisor) within the University of Derby involved in the project?

Are there any research partners external to the University of Derby involved in the project?
No

If yes, please provide details

Initial screening

Does this project involve human participants?
Yes

If yes, should your research adhere to the British Psychology Society (BPS) code of ethics and conduct?
No

Does your study involve data collection with any persons who could be considered vulnerable (under 18 years or the elderly, or those with physical or mental disabilities)?
No

Does your project involve collecting data within NHS organisations or from any NHS employees or patients?
No

Does it involve collecting or analysing primary or unpublished data about people who have died, other than data that is already in the public domain?
No

Does your study involve direct access to an external organisation?
No

Does your study involve species not covered by the Animals Scientific Procedures Act (1993)?
No

Does your study involve ionising radiation?
No

Does your study involve the evaluation of medical devices, or the testing of medicinal and pharmaceutical products?
No

Does your study involve Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service?
No

Does your study involve serving offenders, professionals who work with them, or questions relating to criminal offences?
No

Does your study involve a need to see, acquire or store material that could be viewed as illegal or that may attract the interest of the police, security or intelligence services?
No

Will your study have any impact on the natural or built environment?
No

Funding and previous applications

Has this research been funded by an external organisation (e.g. a research council or public sector body)?
No

If yes, please provide the name of funder:

Has this research been funded internally?
Yes

Name of internal fund
COLLEGE OF Arts, Humanities & Education RESEARCH FUND APPLICATION 2018-19

Funding amount
706.6

Term of funding
One off payment to online questionnaire recruitment service

Date funding agreed
18 May 2020

Have you submitted previous requests for ethical approval to the Committee that relate to this research project?
Yes

If yes, please provide previous application reference:
ETH1819-0058

Study

Brief review of relevant literature and rationale for study

Reports published by Ofcom in 2018 have demonstrated that television is still considered the preferred means of accessing the news by UK adults however, the internet is a close second and the most popular amongst 16-24 year olds.

The importance of technology is becoming more prevalent with each generation: the Baby Boomers (1946-1964) consider it something useful whereas millennials (1981 – 1997) believe it a necessity for day to day living (Bucuta, 2015). Over 90% of post-millennials in the UK have a social media profile,

however that is slightly less than that of millennials according to a figures released by Statista in 2018.

This study will rely heavily on Generational Theory; the recognition that each generation shares similar characteristics is widely acknowledged by academics. Post-millennials are more savvy when it comes to social media than their predecessors and have more focus when it comes to life in general, preferring to stay at home and study rather than be out socialising in bars (Iqbal, 2018). Nevertheless, research (although

not post-millennial focussed) has demonstrated that a large proportion of people are accessing their news via their newsfeed (Anspach, 2017). Put into perspective, these stories have been posted by friends whom it could be argued come from similar backgrounds and therefore simply reinforce the beliefs of the spectator.

In order to provide fresh understanding of post-millennial news consumption, the study will be informed by Actor Network Theory (ANT), especially the emphasis upon both social and technological factors in shaping platforms for news output. It will also utilise the 'Social Shaping of Technology' approach to examine the role of social, political and economic values in these processes.

As well as being in pockets (mobile phones), screens are everywhere: restaurants, waiting-rooms, billboards, libraries etc. therefore categorising the developing world as a 'screen society' (Cashmore et al., 2018). In 2017 Honolulu became the first major city to pass a legislation which penalises pedestrians looking at phones or tablets whilst crossing the street; the aim was to reduce the amount of injuries or deaths. This act in itself supports Bucuta's research which stated millennials see technology as vital for day to day living (Bucuta, 2015). However, as previously discussed, this is to some extent disputed given the figures released by Statista in 2018 which found that fewer post-millennials had social media accounts; this may signal a decline in screens being amalgamated into society's daily routine or simply reflect the change in values of the new generation.

Utilising Generational theory, Actor Network Theory and the Social Shaping of Technology, this research will critically analyse if post-millennials' news consumption habits are being moulded by the development of technology or if new patterns of consumption are developing that can be utilised to sculpture news format and distribution. From that perspective, allied with the empirical approach, it will be possible to provide research orientated advice for the industry and even help to redefine traditional concepts of journalism – such as what means "news" – updating them to this evolving media ecosystems.

Cited references for any sources in the sections on rationale, methods etc.

Anspach, N.M., 2017. The New Personal Influence: How Our Facebook Friends Influence the News We Read. Polit. Commun. 34, 590–606. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2017.1316329>

Birkner, C., 2018. MTV Chooses New Name for Post-Millennial Generation [WWW Document]. URL <https://www.ama.org/publications/eNewsletters/Marketing-News-Weekly/Pages/mtv-post-millennial-founders.aspx> (accessed 11.16.18).

Outline of study design

Statistical data from recognised institutes (such as Statista, Pew, and Nielsen) will provide general data on media consumption nationally. This will be a terminus a quo for the thesis and help to build an illustration as to the habits of post-millennials in the UK, where this research is concentrated.

Focus groups will be conducted using a sample of first year university students. This will be a specific sample of those born following the millennium. This qualitative approach will help to establish the common linguistics used by students with regards to news and social media to enable the construction of appropriate questionnaires for the intended audiences. This is to ensure that there is no misunderstanding with regards to semantics between the researcher and participants.

The second approach will be quantitative, with a comprehensive questionnaire being produced to identify news consumption habits in a larger population of post-millennials. Originally, the questionnaires were to be applied to a testing sample of first year students of the University of Derby. Once this data had been analysed, the questionnaire would then rolled out to sixth forms and other training institutions. However, due to the restrictions put in place by COVID-19, this was not possible, therefore an online recruitment service was used (recommended by the psychologist department at the UoD). Funding was obtained to use the system (as previously stated).

Finally, industry interviews will be used to serve as a comparison as to how journalism practitioners are or are not being influenced by post-millennial news values in terms of their news production. Five qualified and practicing journalists will be interviewed.

Outline of study methods

The methodology for this research is largely sequential with an in-depth literature review providing a theoretical framework embedding ANT, SST and Generational Theory to establish how and why post-millennials are engaging and consuming news in specific way. This will be cross-referenced with the results and discussions throughout the research.

The focus groups will serve as a preliminary study, providing clarification of linguistics for the questionnaire as well as gaining a general consensus of overall attitudes. The sample will be students born 1999/2000. This sample will be made up of approximately two groups of ten. Participants will be given full disclosure as to the purpose of the research as well as information regarding the data collected, how it will be used and stored. They will also be informed of the right to withdraw at any time. Signed consent (with information) will be obtained.

Following on from the focus groups, a test sample of twenty questionnaires will be disseminated using prolific to establish any ambiguity and if amendments are needed. The questionnaire will then be rolled out to 800 participants to allow for a 95 percent confidence level. Respondents will be born between 1999-2002; this is to ensure all respondents are of an age where parental consent is not required and match the criteria needed for post-millennials. Respondents will come from variety of socio-economic backgrounds, geographic locations (within the UK) and educational backgrounds. The aim is also to have an equal ratio of female to male ratio where possible. Respondents will be briefed at the beginning of the questionnaire with details of the purpose of the study and how the data will be stored. They will be allocated a number which will allow them to maintain anonymity and withdraw at any time from the research. Finally, a compulsory tick box requesting consent will be included within the questionnaire. The questionnaires will be anonymous to try to encourage honest responses as well as to avoid issues surrounding Data Protection. The data will then be coded and analysed using SPSS.

The questions for the industry interviews will be informed from the data gathered from the questionnaires. The interviews will be conducted via Zoom due to COVID-19 restrictions. Five practicing journalists will be interviewed. The interviewees will be briefed before and after the interview and have full disclosure as to the purpose of the interviews and data collected, how it will be

used and stored. They will also be informed of their right to withdraw at any time. Consent will be sought prior to the interview via a signed informed consent form as well as verbally prior to the interview being conducted and at the conclusion of the interview. The interviews will be transcribed and a thematic analysis conducted.

Please provide a detailed description of the study sample, covering recruitment, selection, number, age and if appropriate, inclusion and exclusion criteria.
Focus groups - Approximately two groups of ten volunteer students from the university of Derby born between 1999-2000 to ensure parental consent not needed.
Questionnaires - Sample must be from the UK and born between 1999-2002. They will be recruited using the online questionnaire recruitment system prolific.
Five industry interviews - Interviewees must have a degree in journalism and be practicing journalists at the time of the interviews. The aim is to gain participants from TV, Radio, Online and Print to reflect all platforms.

Are payments or rewards/incentives (e.g. participant points) going to be made to the participants?
Yes

If yes, please provide details
£6 per hour (recommended minimum payment) - respondents are given 10 minutes to complete questionnaire.

Do you propose to carry out your project partly in a non-English language?
No

If yes, please provide details

Ethical considerations

Consent
Signed permission will be acquired from all participants.

Deception
N/A

Debriefing
A full written briefing will accompany any request of information from the public, which will include how the data will be used and stored, following the regulations predicted by the Data Protection Act.

Withdrawal from the investigation
All participants will have the right to withdraw at any point during the research.

Anonymity and confidentiality

Dear Student,

RE: Focus Group Invitation for Doctoral Research

I would like to invite you to take part in a focus group (small discussion group) about how news is being accessed and consumed by the new generation. The focus group should last no longer than one and a half hours and all participants will be given full anonymity. The session will be held at the Markeaton Street Campus at 2pm on either the 3rd or 10th April (depending on preference).

More background information will be sent to you before the session once your attendance has been confirmed. This can be sent by email or post dependant on your preference.

Your views will contribute to doctoral research into the consumption of news by post-millennials. This study will help shape the future of journalism and guide organisations in the best ways to cater for audiences.

If you would like to take part in the focus group on either of these sessions, please let me know via email: b.wood@derby.ac.uk.

Yours faithfully

Beth Wood

Participants of focus group will be referred to as M1, F1 depending on gender and number. The details of participants of the questionnaires will not be released and all data will be stored on encrypted files.

Protection of participants
Participants will be granted full anonymity. Sensitive questioning (if applicable) will be relevant and not go beyond the minimal requirement of the research. Participants must be of 18 years or older. Participants from the focus groups will be required to give consent to be recorded. They will also be kept anonymous and recordings will be audio only so as to protect their identities. The participants will all be referred to as M1, F1 etc.

Observation research
Any recording will be stored in encrypted files. Recordings will be destroyed when no longer needed. Participants to give consent to be recorded before research takes place.
Audio recordings only so as to protect the identity of participants.

Giving advice
N/A

Research undertaken in public places
N/A

GDPR - collecting personal data
Data will be stored on encrypted files with access given only to myself and supervisor. Once the data is no longer required, the files will be deleted.

Basis for collecting data
Consent

Data retention
Data will be retained no longer than August 2025 when this research will have been completed and the data no longer needed. It will be stored on encrypted files which are password protected.

Rights of data subject
All participants will provide informed consent prior to the research. They will be briefed on the purpose of the study, how their data will be stored and their right to withdraw at any time.

Commercial sensitivity
n/a

Are you using non-standard software to store or analyse data?
No

Are there other ethical implications that are additional to this list?
No

Doctoral Research, University of Derby

Research Title: Digital Media Ecosystems: An analysis of post-millennial news consumption and its impact on evolving concepts and applications in journalism

Purpose of Research: This research will establish how millennials are consuming news. Post-millennials are more digitally savvy than their predecessors. As of yet, research into post-millennial consumption is limited. Clarification is needed as to whether or not the social values and needs of post-millennials are driving technology to become more intuitive and therefore rendering them passive in their news consumption or if post-millennials are in fact actively seeking the news from multiple sources regardless of what is delivered to them via apps.

The research is *sine que non* to journalism and will have an impact on the media industry. It will help inform changes necessary to ensure audience engagement and interaction with news from a variety of media platforms.

Participant involvement

Focus Group: Those taking part in a focus group will take part in a sound recorded interview. The discussion will last a maximum of one and a half hours. Participants will remain anonymous.

Questionnaire: Participants of the questionnaire will be required to complete an anonymous questionnaire.

Interviews: Those participating in the interviews will be recorded using Zoom, they may remain on or off camera. Participants will not be anonymous. The interviews will last no longer than 20 minutes.

PARTICIPATION IS ENTIRELY VOLUNTARY AND PARTICIPANTS MAY WITHDRAW FROM THE RESEARCH AT ANY TIME WITHOUT PREJUDICE PRIOR TO SUBMISSION OF THESIS (1st SEPTEMBER 2023).

Data Collection and Storage

Focus Group discussions will be recorded using a flash-mic. Participants will be referred to as M1, F1 depending on gender in the transcripts. This is to ensure anonymity.

Questionnaires will also be anonymous. All data will be stored on encrypted files and will be destroyed once no longer required. No personal information will be distributed to third parties.

Interview participants will not be anonymous but do have the right to withdraw at any time. Any personal data will be stored on encrypted files and destroyed once no longer required. No personal information will be distributed to third parties.

If yes, please provide details

Have/do you intend to request ethical approval from any other body/organisation?
No

If yes, please provide details

Do you intend to publish your research?
Yes

Have the activities associated with this research project been risk-assessed?
Yes

Attachments

Cover letter/invitation to participants
Informed consent forms for participants
Participant Information Sheet
Debriefing material
Informed consent from other parties/organisations

Relevant testing materials

Other

Attached files

Initial Invitation to journalists.odt
Invitation letter - focus groups.odt
Informed Consent .odt
Informed Consent .odt
Debrief UPD.odt

Result Dissemination

- Academic articles will be shared with organisations which participated.
- Interactive workshops will be delivered to journalism/ media students within the University of Derby.
- Interim and full findings will be submitted to the annual Derby Research Conference/ Learning and Teaching Conference.
- Submit papers at conference.
- Publications in academic journals.

For any further information or should you wish to raise any concerns, please contact the researcher, Beth Wood at b.wood@derby.ac.uk or the University of Derby Research Office at pgsstudentoffice@derby.ac.uk.

Signed: _____ Print Name: _____
Date: _____

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a PhD student and Graduate Teaching Assistant at the University of Derby. As part of my research, I am exploring how those born after the year 2000 are consuming and engaging with the news. The aim is to identify if current journalism practices are informing younger audiences in the most effective way given developments in technology and if adaptations are needed.

I am contacting journalist within the UK with the intention of conducting interviews to establish how the journalism industry is producing and disseminating the news and if this meets the values of Generation Z.

The interviews will be conducted via Zoom and should last no longer than 20 minutes.

Thank you for taking the time to read this email. I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Yours Faithfully

Beth Wood
07772278769

Doctoral Research, University of Derby

Research Title: Digital Media Ecosystems: An analysis of post-millennial news consumption and its impact on evolving concepts and applications in journalism

Purpose of Research: This research will establish how millennials are consuming news. Post-millennials are more digitally savvy than their predecessors. As of yet, research into post-millennial consumption is limited. Clarification is needed as to whether or not the social values and needs of post-millennials are driving technology to become more intuitive and therefore rendering them passive in their news consumption or if post-millennials are in fact actively seeking the news from multiple sources regardless of what is delivered to them via apps.

The research is *sine que non* to journalism and will have an impact on the media industry. It will help inform changes necessary to ensure audience engagement and interaction with news from a variety of media platforms.

Participant involvement

Focus Group: Those taking part in a focus group will take part in a sound recorded interview. The discussion will last a maximum of one and a half hours. Participants will remain anonymous.

Questionnaire: Participants of the questionnaire will be required to complete an anonymous questionnaire.

Interviews: Those participating in the interviews will be recorded using Zoom, they may remain on or off camera. Participants will not be anonymous. The interviews will last no longer than 20 minutes.

PARTICIPATION IS ENTIRELY VOLUNTARY AND PARTICIPANTS MAY WITHDRAW FROM THE RESEARCH AT ANY TIME WITHOUT PREJUDICE, NOW OR IN FUTURE.

Data Collection and Storage

Focus Group discussions will be recorded using a flash-mic. Participants will be referred to as M1, F1 depending on gender in the transcripts. This is to ensure anonymity.

Questionnaires will also be anonymous. All data will be stored on encrypted files and will be destroyed once no longer required. No personal information will be distributed to third parties.

Interview participants will not be anonymous but do have the right to withdraw at any time. Any personal data will be stored on encrypted files and destroyed once no longer required. No personal information will be distributed to third parties.

Result Dissemination

- Academic articles will be shared with organisations which participated.
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- Interim and full findings will be submitted to the annual Derby Research Conference/ Learning and Teaching Conference.
- Submit papers at conference.
- Publications in academic journals.

For any further information or should you wish to raise any concerns, please contact the researcher, Beth Wood at b.wood@derby.ac.uk or the University of Derby Research Office at pgstudentoffice@derby.ac.uk.

Signed: _____ Print Name: _____

Date: _____

Debrief

Study Title: Digital Media Ecosystems: An analysis of post-millennial news consumption and its impact on evolving concepts and applications in journalism

About this Study: This research will establish how millennials are consuming news. Post-millennials are more digitally savvy than their predecessors. As of yet, research into post-millennial consumption is limited. Clarification is needed as to whether or not the social values and needs of post-millennials are driving technology to become more intuitive and therefore rendering them passive in their news consumption or if post-millennials are in fact actively seeking the news from multiple sources regardless of what is delivered to them via apps.

The research is vital to journalism and will have an impact on the media industry. The data collected will help inform changes necessary to ensure audience engagement and interaction with news from a variety of media platforms.

Data Collection and Storage: All data will be stored on encrypted files and will be destroyed once no longer required. No personal information will be distributed to third parties. Participants and respondents may withdraw from the research at any time prior to the submission of the thesis (1st September 2023) without prejudice

Outcome of research: The results will be shared in the form of academic articles, PhD Thesis, conferences and other related academic publications. These will also be made available to participants/respondents upon request.

Researcher: Beth Wood b.wood@derby.ac.uk

PLEASE PRINT FOR YOUR OWN RECORDS

For any ethical concerns, please contact the research office at the University of Derby pgstudentoffice@derby.ac.uk

B.3 Shares, Likes and Comments

	BBC								
	Comments on article	Twitter Comments	Retweets	Twitter Likes	FB Comments	FB Shares	Facebook Reactions	Insta Comments	Insta Likes
Derek Chevin being found guilty of George Floyd's murder	0	466	8300	22900	4900	4600	47000	2412	181502
Lockdown easing on April 12th	5237	158	121	333	0	0	0	0	0
The death of the Duke of Edinburgh	0	75	160	952	886	253	5500	992	150799
The Palace response to the Duke and Duchess of Sussex's Oprah interview	0	0	0	0	5900	496	17000	2969	98544
English football clubs leaving the European Super League	10069	65	176	942	2500	2200	18000	274	26,898
	Sky								
	Comments on article	Twitter Comments	Retweets	Twitter Likes	FB Comments	FB Shares	Facebook Reactions	Insta Comments	Insta Likes
Derek Chevin being found guilty of George Floyd's murder	0	18	32	187	0	0	0	540	153945
Lockdown easing on April 12th	0	76	236	290	0	0	0	200	9037
The death of the Duke of Edinburgh	0	35	61	275	0	0	0	159	10602
The Palace response to the Duke and Duchess of Sussex's Oprah interview	0	42	10	58	3500	831	3400	0	0
English football clubs leaving the European Super League	0	34	93	334	597	301	2900	6691	559545
	The Guardian								
	Comments on article	Twitter Comments	Retweets	Twitter Likes	FB Comments	FB Shares	Facebook Reactions	Insta Comments	Insta Likes
Derek Chevin being found guilty of George Floyd's murder	0	46	956	2900	1300	3800	23000	699	84035
Lockdown easing on April 12th	0	10	34	37	0	0	0	0	0
The death of the Duke of Edinburgh	0	31	118	288	3800	6400	31000	1190	66019
The Palace response to the Duke and Duchess of Sussex's Oprah interview	0	25	28	83	761	70	993	0	0
English football clubs leaving the European Super League	0	0	9	32	0	0	0	0	0
	The Telegraph								
	Comments on article	Twitter Comments	Retweets	Twitter Likes	FB Comments	FB Shares	Facebook Reactions	Insta Comments	Insta Likes
Derek Chevin being found guilty of George Floyd's murder	0	6	6	21	0	0	0	124	3099
Lockdown easing on April 12th	0	8	31	85	0	0	0	9	1128
The death of the Duke of Edinburgh	0	196	2200	4700	247	372	1800	483	26743
The Palace response to the Duke and Duchess of Sussex's Oprah interview	0	16	11	32	513	77	603	0	0
English football clubs leaving the European Super League	0	1	6	28	0	0	0	0	0
	The Independent								
	Comments on article	Twitter Comments	Retweets	Twitter Likes	FB Comments	FB Shares	Facebook Reactions	Insta Comments	Insta Likes
Derek Chevin being found guilty of George Floyd's murder	0	13	180	646	768	559	5800	0	0
Lockdown easing on April 12th	6	1	1	11	0	0	0	0	0
The death of the Duke of Edinburgh	344	6	31	96	2600	3600	10000	102	4797
The Palace response to the Duke and Duchess of Sussex's Oprah interview	78	9	16	18	0	0	0	61	1317
English football clubs leaving the European Super League	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

B.4 Kruskal-Wallis Tests of Education Level against 21 Dependent Variables

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of Level of trust of print news before lockdown is the same across categories of Highest level of study.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.248	Retain the null hypothesis.
2	The distribution of Frequency of printed news access before lockdown is the same across categories of Highest level of study.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.126	Retain the null hypothesis.
3	The distribution of Level of trust of News organisation website before lockdown is the same across categories of Highest level of study.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
4	The distribution of Frequency of news organisation website before lockdown is the same across categories of Highest level of study.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
5	The distribution of Frequency of other websites for news before lockdown is the same across categories of Highest level of study.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.095	Retain the null hypothesis.
6	The distribution of Level of trust of other websites before lockdown is the same across categories of Highest level of study.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.224	Retain the null hypothesis.
7	The distribution of Frequency of news apps before lockdown is the same across categories of Highest level of study.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.318	Retain the null hypothesis.
8	The distribution of Level of trust of news before lockdown is the same across categories of Highest level of study.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.047	Reject the null hypothesis.
9	The distribution of Frequency of social media accessed for news before lockdown is the same across categories of Highest level of study.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.109	Retain the null hypothesis.
10	The distribution of Level of trust of social media news before lockdown is the same across categories of Highest level of study.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.044	Reject the null hypothesis.
11	The distribution of Level of trust in news accessed before lockdown is the same across categories of Highest level of study.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.411	Retain the null hypothesis.
12	The distribution of Overall news accessed in home growing up is the same across categories of Highest level of study.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.002	Reject the null hypothesis.
13	The distribution of Levels of engagement with news since lockdown is the same across categories of Highest level of study.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.014	Reject the null hypothesis.
14	The distribution of Comparison of trust in news following lockdown is the same across categories of Highest level of study.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.435	Retain the null hypothesis.
15	The distribution of Frequency of TV news access before lockdown is the same across categories of Highest level of study.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.079	Retain the null hypothesis.
16	The distribution of Level of trust of TV news before lockdown is the same across categories of Highest level of study.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.130	Retain the null hypothesis.
17	The distribution of Frequency of Radio news access before lockdown is the same across categories of Highest level of study.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.033	Reject the null hypothesis.
18	The distribution of Level of trust of Radio news before lockdown is the same across categories of Highest level of study.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.086	Retain the null hypothesis.
19	The distribution of Level of trust of news accessed on social media before Lockdown is the same across categories of Highest level of study.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.092	Retain the null hypothesis.
20	The distribution of Level of trust of content before Lockdown is the same across categories of Highest level of study.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.136	Retain the null hypothesis.
21	The distribution of Frequency of news access before Lockdown is the same across categories of Highest level of study.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.004	Reject the null hypothesis.
22	The distribution of Before Lockdown how likely to comment on content online is the same across categories of Highest level of study.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.015	Reject the null hypothesis.
23	The distribution of Before Lockdown the amount of content considered news by participants on social media is the same across categories of Highest level of study.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.309	Retain the null hypothesis.

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

B.5 Kruskal-Wallis Tests of Socio-economic Status against 21 Dependent Variables

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of Level of trust of print news before lockdown is the same across categories of Current Location.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.001	Reject the null hypothesis.
2	The distribution of Frequency of printed news access before lockdown is the same across categories of Current Location.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0	Reject the null hypothesis.
3	The distribution of Level of trust of News organisation website before lockdown is the same across categories of Current Location.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.273	Retain the null hypothesis.
4	The distribution of Frequency of news organisation website before lockdown is the same across categories of Current Location.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.344	Retain the null hypothesis.
5	The distribution of Frequency of other websites for news before lockdown is the same across categories of Current Location.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.169	Retain the null hypothesis.
6	The distribution of Level of trust of other websites before lockdown is the same across categories of Current Location.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.218	Retain the null hypothesis.
7	The distribution of Frequency of news apps before lockdown is the same across categories of Current Location.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.541	Retain the null hypothesis.
8	The distribution of Level of trust of news apps before lockdown is the same across categories of Current Location.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.092	Retain the null hypothesis.
9	The distribution of Frequency of social media accessed for news before lockdown is the same across categories of Current Location.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.087	Retain the null hypothesis.
10	The distribution of Level of trust of social media news before lockdown is the same across categories of Current Location.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.488	Retain the null hypothesis.
11	The distribution of Level of trust in news accessed before lockdown is the same across categories of Current Location.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.823	Retain the null hypothesis.
12	The distribution of Overall news accessed in home growing up is the same across categories of Current Location.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.249	Retain the null hypothesis.
13	The distribution of Levels of engagement with news since lockdown is the same across categories of Current Location.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.33	Retain the null hypothesis.
14	The distribution of Comparison of trust in news following lockdown is the same across categories of Current Location.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.777	Retain the null hypothesis.
15	The distribution of Frequency of TV news access before lockdown is the same across categories of Current Location.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.83	Retain the null hypothesis.
16	The distribution of Level of trust of TV news before lockdown is the same across categories of Current Location.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.211	Retain the null hypothesis.
17	The distribution of Frequency of Radio news access before lockdown is the same across categories of Current Location.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.249	Retain the null hypothesis.
18	The distribution of Level of trust of Radio news before lockdown is the same across categories of Current Location.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.074	Retain the null hypothesis.
19	The distribution of Level of trust of news accessed on social media before Lockdown is the same across categories of Current Location.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.306	Retain the null hypothesis.
20	The distribution of Level of trust of content before Lockdown is the same across categories of Current Location.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.603	Retain the null hypothesis.
21	The distribution of Frequency of news access before Lockdown is the same across categories of Current Location.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.028	Reject the null hypothesis.
22	The distribution of Before Lockdown how likely to comment on content online is the same across categories of Current Location.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.346	Retain the null hypothesis.
23	The distribution of Before Lockdown the amount of content considered news by participants on social media is the same across categories of Current Location.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.774	Retain the null hypothesis.

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

B.6 Kruskal-Wallis Tests of socio-economic status against independent variables.

Hypothesis Test Summary			
	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig. Decision
1	The distribution of Level of trust of print news before lockdown is the same across categories of Highest earner in family.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.624 Retain the null hypothesis.
2	The distribution of Frequency of printed news access before lockdown is the same across categories of Highest earner in family.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.531 Retain the null hypothesis.
3	The distribution of Level of trust of News organisation website before lockdown is the same across categories of Highest earner in family.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.000 Reject the null hypothesis.
4	The distribution of Frequency of news organisation website before lockdown is the same across categories of Highest earner in family.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.000 Reject the null hypothesis.
5	The distribution of Frequency of other websites for news before lockdown is the same across categories of Highest earner in family.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.011 Reject the null hypothesis.
6	The distribution of Level of trust of other websites before lockdown is the same across categories of Highest earner in family.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.074 Retain the null hypothesis.
7	The distribution of Frequency of news apps before lockdown is the same across categories of Highest earner in family.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.002 Reject the null hypothesis.
8	The distribution of Level of trust of news apps before lockdown is the same across categories of Highest earner in family.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.013 Reject the null hypothesis.
9	The distribution of Frequency of social media accessed for news before lockdown is the same across categories of Highest earner in family.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.013 Reject the null hypothesis.
10	The distribution of Level of trust of social media news before lockdown is the same across categories of Highest earner in family.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.357 Retain the null hypothesis.
11	The distribution of Level of trust in news accessed before lockdown is the same across categories of Highest earner in family.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.121 Retain the null hypothesis.
12	The distribution of Overall news accessed in home growing up is the same across categories of highest earner in family.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.000 Reject the null hypothesis.
13	The distribution of Levels of engagement with news since lockdown is the same across categories of Highest earner in family.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.851 Retain the null hypothesis.
14	The distribution of Comparison of trust in news following lockdown is the same across categories of Highest earner in family.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.270 Retain the null hypothesis.
15	The distribution of Frequency of TV news access before lockdown is the same across categories of Highest earner in family.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.318 Retain the null hypothesis.
16	The distribution of Level of trust of TV news before lockdown is the same across categories of Highest earner in family.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.008 Reject the null hypothesis.
17	The distribution of Frequency of Radio news access before lockdown is the same across categories of Highest earner in family.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.049 Reject the null hypothesis.
18	The distribution of Level of trust of Radio news before lockdown is the same across categories of Highest earner in family.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.176 Retain the null hypothesis.
19	The distribution of Level of trust of news accessed on social media before Lockdown is the same across categories of Highest earner in family.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.734 Retain the null hypothesis.
20	The distribution of Level of trust of content before Lockdown is the same across categories of Highest earner in family.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.760 Retain the null hypothesis.
21	The distribution of Frequency of news access before Lockdown is the same across categories of Highest earner in family.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.092 Retain the null hypothesis.
22	The distribution of Before Lockdown how likely to comment on content online is the same across categories of Highest earner in family.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.000 Reject the null hypothesis.
23	The distribution of Before Lockdown the amount of content considered news by participants on social media is the same across categories of Highest earner in family.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.349 Retain the null hypothesis.

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

B.7 Kruskal-Wallis Tests of Parental News Consumption against Dependent Variables

SPSS Abbrev	Frequenc y of news access EYS	Parent TV	Parents Radio	Parents Newspape rs	Parents News web	Parents other web	Parent Social media	Parents overall trust
BLDTV	Rejected	Reject						
ALDNewsEng	Retained							
BLDNewsTru	Rejected	Reject	Retaine d	Rejected	Retaine d	Retaine d	Retaine d	Rejecte d
ALDTru	Retained	Retaine d	Retaine d	Rejected	Retaine d	Retaine d	Rejecte d	Rejecte d
BLDRad	Rejected		Rejecte d					
BLDPrint	Rejected			Rejected				
BLDNewsOrg	Rejected				Rejecte d			
BLDOthWeb	Retained					Rejecte d		
BLDNewsApp	Rejected							
BLDSocMedNews	Rejected						Rejecte d	
BLDTVTrus	Rejected	Rejecte d						Rejecte d
BLDRadTru	Rejected		Rejecte d					Retaine d
BLDPriNTru	Rejected			Rejected				Retaine d
BLDNewsOrgTru	Rejected				Rejecte d			Rejecte d
BLDOthWebTru	Retained					Rejecte d		Retaine d
BLDNewsAppTru	Rejected							Rejecte d
BLDSocMedNews Tru	Retained						Rejecte d	Rejecte d

B.8 Kruskal-Wallis Tests of News Engagement in the home when growing up against 19 Dependent Variables

Hypothesis Test Summary				
	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of Frequency of TV news access before lockdown is the same across categories of Overall news accessed in home growing up.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
2	The distribution of Frequency of news access before lockdown is the same across categories of Overall news accessed in home growing up.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
3	The distribution of Levels of engagement with news since lockdown is the same across categories of Overall news accessed in home growing up.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.198	Retain the null hypothesis.
4	The distribution of Comparison of trust in news following lockdown is the same across categories of Overall news accessed in home growing up.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.152	Retain the null hypothesis.
5	The distribution of Frequency of Radio news access before lockdown is the same across categories of Overall news accessed in home growing up.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
6	The distribution of Frequency of printed news access before lockdown is the same across categories of Overall news accessed in home growing up.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.001	Reject the null hypothesis.
7	The distribution of Frequency of news organisation website before lockdown is the same across categories of Overall news accessed in home growing up.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
8	The distribution of Frequency of other websites for news before lockdown is the same across categories of Overall news accessed in home growing up.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.066	Retain the null hypothesis.
9	The distribution of Frequency of news apps before lockdown is the same across categories of Overall news accessed in home growing up.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
10	The distribution of Frequency of social media accessed for news before lockdown is the same across categories of Overall news accessed in home growing up.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
11	The distribution of Level of trust of social media news before lockdown is the same across categories of Overall news accessed in home growing up.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.311	Retain the null hypothesis.
12	The distribution of Level of trust in news accessed before lockdown is the same across categories of Overall news accessed in home growing up.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.011	Reject the null hypothesis.
13	The distribution of Level of trust of content before lockdown is the same across categories of Overall news accessed in home growing up.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.227	Retain the null hypothesis.
14	The distribution of Level of trust of TV news before lockdown is the same across categories of Overall news accessed in home growing up.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
15	The distribution of Level of trust of Radio news before lockdown is the same across categories of Overall news accessed in home growing up.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.001	Reject the null hypothesis.
16	The distribution of Level of trust of print news before lockdown is the same across categories of Overall news accessed in home growing up.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.027	Reject the null hypothesis.
17	The distribution of Level of trust of News organisation website before lockdown is the same across categories of Overall news accessed in home growing up.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.004	Reject the null hypothesis.
18	The distribution of Level of trust of other websites before lockdown is the same across categories of Overall news accessed in home growing up.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.197	Retain the null hypothesis.
19	The distribution of Level of trust of news apps before lockdown is the same across categories of Overall news accessed in home growing up.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.

B.9 Kruskal-Wallis Test of parental TV news engagement against levels of trust and frequency of TV news consumption before the first UK lockdown.

Hypothesis Test Summary				
	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of Frequency of TV news access before lockdown is the same across categories of Parental TV news access.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
2	The distribution of Level of trust in news accessed before lockdown is the same across categories of Parental TV news access.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.035	Reject the null hypothesis.
3	The distribution of Level of trust of TV news before lockdown is the same across categories of Parental TV news access.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

B.10 Kruskal-Wallis Test of Parental Radio News Consumption against Post-Millennial Radio Consumption before lockdown and 'Gen Z' News Value

Hypothesis Test Summary

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of Frequency of Radio news access before lockdown is the same across categories of Parental radio news access.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
2	The distribution of Level of trust of Radio news before lockdown is the same across categories of Parental radio news access.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

B.11 Kruskal-Wallis Tests of post-millennial print news engagement and news value in print news before the first UK lockdown; ‘Gen Z’ news value before first UK lockdown and a comparison of news value following the first UK lockdown against parental frequency of print news consumption.

Hypothesis Test Summary				
	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of Frequency of printed news access before lockdown is the same across categories of Parental print news access.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
2	The distribution of Level of trust of print news before lockdown is the same across categories of Parental print news access.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
3	The distribution of Comparison of trust in news following lockdown is the same across categories of Parental print news access.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
4	The distribution of Level of trust in news accessed before lockdown is the same across categories of Parental print news access.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.014	Reject the null hypothesis.

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

B.12 Kruskal-Wallis Tests of frequency of news accessed via a news organisation's website and news value of content before first UK lockdown against the frequency of parental access to news via a news organisation's website.

Hypothesis Test Summary				
	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of Frequency of news organisation website before lockdown is the same across categories of Parental news organisation website news access.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
2	The distribution of Level of trust of News organisation website before lockdown is the same across categories of Parental news organisation website news access.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.006	Reject the null hypothesis.

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

B.13 Kruskal-Wallis Tests of frequency of news accessed via a other websites and news value of content before first UK lockdown against the frequency of parental access to news via other websites.

Hypothesis Test Summary

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of Frequency of other websites for news before lockdown is the same across categories of Parental other website news access.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
2	The distribution of Level of trust of other websites before lockdown is the same across categories of Parental other website news access.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

B.14 Kruskal-Wallis Tests of frequency of news accessed through social media and the perceived new value before the first UK lockdown; a comparison of trust following the first UK lockdown against the frequency of parental engagement with news via social media.

Hypothesis Test Summary

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of Frequency of social media accessed for news before lockdown is the same across categories of Parental social media news access.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
2	The distribution of Level of trust of social media news before lockdown is the same across categories of Parental social media news access.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.021	Reject the null hypothesis.
3	The distribution of Comparison of trust in news following lockdown is the same across categories of Parental social media news access.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.006	Reject the null hypothesis.

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

B.15 Kruskal-Wallis Tests identifying the significance of perceived parental trust in overall news content on post-millennial news value.

Hypothesis Test Summary

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of Level of trust of TV news before lockdown is the same across categories of Parental trust in accessed news.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.006	Reject the null hypothesis.
2	The distribution of Level of trust in news accessed before lockdown is the same across categories of Parental trust in accessed news.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
3	The distribution of Comparison of trust in news following lockdown is the same across categories of Parental trust in accessed news.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.020	Reject the null hypothesis.
4	The distribution of Level of trust of News organisation website before lockdown is the same across categories of Parental trust in accessed news.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
5	The distribution of Level of trust of news apps before lockdown is the same across categories of Parental trust in accessed news.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.012	Reject the null hypothesis.
6	The distribution of Level of trust of social media news before lockdown is the same across categories of Parental trust in accessed news.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.026	Reject the null hypothesis.

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

B.16 Kruskal-Wallis Test

- 1) Frequency of news accessed growing up – ‘Gen Z’ frequency of tv news consumed before first UK lockdown.
- 2) Frequency of news accessed growing up – ‘Gen Z’ levels of engagement in news since first UK lockdown.
- 3) Frequency of news accessed growing up – ‘Gen Z’ levels of trust in news before first UK lockdown.
- 4) Frequency of news accessed growing up – ‘Gen Z’ comparison of trust in news after first UK lockdown.
- 5) Frequency of news accessed growing up – ‘Gen Z’ frequency of radio news access before first UK lockdown.
- 6) Frequency of news accessed growing up – ‘Gen Z’ frequency of print news access before first UK lockdown.

- 7) Frequency of news accessed growing up – ‘Gen Z’ frequency of news accessed via a news organisation’s website before first UK lockdown.
- 8) Frequency of news accessed growing up – ‘Gen Z’ frequency of news accessed via other websites before first UK lockdown.
- 9) Frequency of news accessed growing up – ‘Gen Z’ frequency of news accessed via news apps before first UK lockdown.
- 10) Frequency of news accessed growing up – ‘Gen Z’ frequency of news accessed via social media before first UK lockdown.
- 11) Frequency of news accessed growing up – ‘Gen Z’ level of trust in news accessed on social media before first UK lockdown.
- 12) Frequency of news accessed growing up – ‘Gen Z’ level of trust in TV news before first UK lockdown.
- 13) Frequency of news accessed growing up – ‘Gen Z’ level of trust in radio news before first UK lockdown.
- 14) Frequency of news accessed growing up – ‘Gen Z’ level of trust in print news before first UK lockdown.
- 15) Frequency of news accessed growing up – ‘Gen Z’ level of trust in news accessed via a news organisation’s website before first UK lockdown.
- 16) Frequency of news accessed growing up – ‘Gen Z’ level of trust in news accessed via other websites before first UK lockdown.
- 17) Frequency of news accessed growing up – ‘Gen Z’ level of trust in news accessed via news apps before first UK lockdown.
- 18) Frequency of news accessed growing up – ‘Gen Z’ frequency of news accessed via of social media before first UK lockdown.
- 19) Frequency of news accessed growing up – ‘Gen Z’ level of trust in news accessed via social media before first UK lockdown.
- 20) Frequency of parents accessing TV news – ‘Gen Z’ frequency of news accessed before first UK lockdown.
- 21) Frequency of parents accessing TV news – ‘Gen Z’ level of trust in news before first UK lockdown.
- 22) Frequency of parents accessing TV news – ‘Gen Z’ comparison of trust after first UK lockdown.

- 23)Frequency of parents accessing TV news – ‘Gen Z’ level of trust in TV news before first UK lockdown.
- 24)Frequency parents accessed radio news – ‘Gen Z’ frequency of radio news accessed before first UK lockdown.
- 25)Frequency parents accessed radio news – ‘Gen Z’ level of trust before first UK lockdown.
- 26)Frequency parents accessed radio news – ‘Gen Z’ comparison of news engagement after first UK lockdown.
- 27)Frequency parents accessed radio news – ‘Gen Z’ level of trust in radio news since first UK lockdown.
- 28)Frequency parents accessed print news – ‘Gen Z’ frequency of print news accessed before first UK lockdown.
- 29)Frequency parents accessed print news – ‘Gen Z’ level of trust in news before first UK lockdown.
- 30)Frequency parents accessed print news – ‘Gen Z’ comparison of trust after first UK lockdown.
- 31)Frequency parents accessed print news – ‘Gen Z’ level of trust in print news before first UK lockdown.
- 32)Frequency parents accessed news from a news organisation’s website – ‘Gen Z’ frequency of news accessed via a news organisation’s website before first UK lockdown.
- 33)Frequency parents accessed news from a news organisation’s website - ‘Gen Z’ level of trust in news before first UK lockdown.
- 34)Frequency parents accessed news from a news organisation’s website - ‘Gen Z’ comparison of trust after first UK lockdown.
- 35)Frequency parents accessed news from a news organisation’s website – ‘Gen Z’ level of trust in news accessed via a news organisation’s website before first UK lockdown.
- 36)Frequency parents accessed news from other websites – ‘Gen Z’ frequency of news accessed via other websites before first UK lockdown.
- 37)Frequency parents accessed news from other websites - ‘Gen Z’ level of trust in news before first UK lockdown.

- 38)Frequency parents accessed news from other websites - 'Gen Z' comparison of trust after first UK lockdown.
- 39)Frequency parents accessed news from other websites – 'Gen Z' level of trust in news accessed via other websites before first UK lockdown.
- 40)Frequency parents accessed news from social media – 'Gen Z' frequency of news accessed via social media before first UK lockdown.
- 41)Frequency parents accessed news from social media - 'Gen Z' level of trust in news before first UK lockdown.
- 42)Frequency parents accessed news from social media - 'Gen Z' comparison of trust after first UK lockdown.
- 43)Frequency parents accessed news from social media – 'Gen Z' trust in news accessed via social media before first UK lockdown.
- 44)Perceived parent's overall trust in news - 'Gen Z' level of trust in news before first UK lockdown.
- 45)Perceived parent's overall trust in news - 'Gen Z' comparison of trust after first UK lockdown.