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How and Why People Consume News: Studying News Use and Its Enablers in Context of Media Repertoires

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ABSTRACT

In today's complex digitized media landscape, understanding how people interact with news is crucial. This study aims to provide a deeper understanding of people's news use patterns by studying them in the context of their media repertoires. Specifically, we analyze whether news use occupies a prominent (i.e., the dominance of news within one's overall media use) and/or diverse (i.e., encompassing a wide range of platforms, devices, and sources) role within people's media repertoires. We also explore which personal or contextual factors enable or hinder the prominence and diversity of news use. Employing a mixed-methods approach, we conducted a survey ($n=2309$) and interviews ($n=46$) to identify different media repertoires, news use patterns and news use enablers. We found six media repertoires, two of which were primarily news-oriented (News Omnivores and Traditionalists), and two of which demonstrated diverse news use (News Omnivores and Multimedia Masters). Moreover, nine categories of news use enablers were identified, which help explain the role of news use within a media repertoire. This study provides insights into the interplay of news use and broader media routines and highlights the importance of considering media repertoires to better understand audience engagement with news.

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Introduction

Digitization has fundamentally reshaped the way people engage with news and learn about current events (Picone, Courtois, and Paulussen 2015). It has disrupted the media landscape, as news is now increasingly being created, shared, and consumed in innovative formats by both journalistic and non-journalistic actors across a variety of platforms (Wunderlich, Hölig, and Hasebrink 2022). As a result, the news supply has grown exponentially, making media choice arguably "the most defining characteristic of the media environment" (Edgerly 2015, 1). People navigate through the myriads of news options available, resulting in highly individualized and fragmented news consumption patterns that are difficult to capture systematically (Picone, Courtois, and

Paulussen 2015). Therefore, the ways in which news users encounter news, and the reasons why they do so, have become unpredictable and difficult to monitor (Steensen, Ferrer-Conill, and Peters 2020).

While this has complicated the study of news use, it remains relevant for researchers to examine the role that news plays in people's daily lives, as well as the factors that enable or hinder news use. Especially as the evolving relationship between audiences and journalism has come under increasing strain over the past decade. Long-term trends point to decreasing interest in news (Newman et al. 2024), increasing cases of news avoidance (Andersen et al. 2024), and significant challenges to audience trust in the news media in various markets worldwide (Newman et al. 2025), including Flanders, the context of this study (Picone et al. 2025).

While a growing body of audience-centered studies have tried to grasp these trends and add to our knowledge of audiences' engagement with news (e.g., Hendrickx 2024; Van Damme et al. 2015), most solely focus on news (use). Although this focus is valuable, it offers a partial view, as previous research has shown that contextual factors, such as other media uses, also influence news use (Swart, Peters, and Broersma 2017). For instance, passive news avoidance can occur when a preference for entertainment content conflicts with one's inclination to engage with news (Skovsgaard and Andersen 2020). Therefore, we argue that news use patterns and its characteristics are best examined in the context of people's broader media uses. This approach allows us to assess whether news use occupies a prominent (i.e., important and/or dominant component of a media repertoire) and/or diverse (i.e., encompassing a wide range of platforms, devices, and sources) role within people's entire media use, and additionally, what possibly underlies or explains this. If we study news use in isolation, we risk overlooking its integration into everyday media practices, and how it acquires (social) meaning in people's lives.

For this reason, this paper contributes to news audience research by (1) analyzing the prominence and diversity of audiences' news use patterns within the broader context of their media repertoires (i.e., all media someone frequently uses; conform Hasebrink and Hepp 2017), and (2) identifying the personal and contextual factors that may enable or constrain the prominence and diversity of these news use patterns. In this paper, we refer to such factors as news use enablers and news use disablers.

To achieve this, we have conducted a large-scale survey and in-depth interviews to identify meaningful media repertoires. The survey captured data on media use patterns, preferences, and behaviors among a representative sample of Flemish media users, resulting in a quantitative identification of distinct media repertoires. Subsequently, in-depth interviews with people from all identified repertoires deepened our understanding of their media and news use patterns and provided intricate insights into their key news use enablers and disablers. To systematically map media repertoires, the Quadruple Articulation Framework (QAF) served as a methodological tool through our study. This framework conceptualizes media use as occurring across four distinct yet interrelated layers: platform (i.e., the digital service through which the media content is consumed), content (i.e., the media product itself), object (i.e., all media devices or carriers used for consumption) and context (i.e., the temporal, psychological, and spatial circumstances of media use) (Van Damme and Evens, 2025).

Literature Review

Studying News Use Beyond Single Media Focus

Digitization has complicated audiences' news use patterns by providing them with an abundance of content, personalizing and individualizing their media use (Wu et al. 2023), and challenging the conceptualization of what can be considered news (Edgerly and Vraga 2020). The ways in which news fit into people's daily lives have become obscured and contested, especially among younger audiences who are the most difficult to reach (Wunderlich, Hölig, and Hasebrink 2022). Understanding these dynamics is critical, as the erosion of news engagement raises critical questions about the function of journalism in today's competitive and volatile landscape.

In response, the news industry has increasingly shifted their focus to the user, coined "the audience turn in journalism" (Costera Meijer 2020), which is based on the premise that today "news users claim an ever-more important role in the way journalism is shaped" (Picone, Courtois, and Paulussen 2015, 1). Journalism Studies scholars have followed suit and adopted the radical audience turn (Swart et al. 2022), arguing that if we want to understand the role that journalism and news play in users' daily lives, we need to understand how they construct their news use patterns. Or as Picone and colleagues (2015, 1) put it: "The changing ways in which media are consumed should therefore be at the core of our understanding of journalism in the digital news environment."

The effort to better understand news audiences is reflected in studies worldwide measuring audiences' news use and perceptions (e.g., Molyneux 2018; Van Damme et al. 2015). While these studies provide valuable insights for scholars and the industry, they often tend to exhibit a *single-media bias* (Hasebrink and Domeyer 2012), solely mapping news use on specific devices or platforms, or through distinct formats. In today's hybrid media system (Chadwick 2017) –where people are constantly surrounded by a diverse array of media– such an isolated approach seems insufficient (Hasebrink and Popp 2006), as news audiences increasingly "combine different news media sources, old and new, into complex patterns of media use" (Yuan 2011, 4).

In response, audience researchers adopted a more holistic approach, and map people's cross-media information or news repertoires (e.g., Swart, Peters, and Broersma 2017; Yuan 2011), exploring subsets of news sources that audiences often use in tandem (Edgerly 2015). They result in detailed typologies of users featuring different news use patterns that, to name a few examples, center around a preference for certain news characteristics (see Swart, Peters, and Broersma 2017), news topics, platforms, and devices (e.g., Yuan 2011), or frequently used news sources, news participation, and news content attributes (see Edgerly 2015). An important characteristic of these studies is that they not only seek to capture the accumulation of various (news) media someone engages with, but also focus on the interaction and interrelatedness of these uses, as well as the meaning-making processes that underlie those relationships (Hasebrink and Domeyer 2012). In this way, these studies provide in-depth insights into the intricacies of audiences' news uses, responding to the complexity of the media landscape in which these uses occur.

Prominence and Diversity of News Use

We aim to comprehensively examine news use patterns and their characteristics from a holistic perspective. Previous studies have shown how news use is influenced by contextual factors, such as one's media uses (Skovsgaard and Andersen 2020), access to media and the internet (Klopfenstein, Wyss, and Weber 2024), or daily routines (Groot Kormelink 2022). Despite the importance of these factors, many studies still isolate news use, overlooking its relationship with people's broader media repertoires (see Merten (2020) for an exception). Adopting this broader approach, however, helps us to understand how news uses emerge and exist as part of everyday media routines. More concretely, it helps us to analyze the following:

Firstly, this allows us to gain an insight into the *prominence* and *diversity* of news use in relation to the overall media repertoire. *Prominence* refers to the importance or significance of news within a person's overall media use. It indicates how central, dominant, or prioritized news use is compared to other media uses, and the meaning-making behind it, resulting in a better understanding of what makes news use relevant. Swart, Peters, and Broersma (2017) found that a discrepancy exists between the news media that are considered important and the news media that are used most frequently. By studying the prominence of news use, we add to this discussion. *Diversity* refers to the variety of ways in which people frequently consume news. This includes the range of sources (e.g., newspapers, TV, social media), formats (e.g., articles, podcasts), and topics (e.g., politics, entertainment) they engage with.

Second, this approach highlights a fundamental principle in media repertoire research: the relational nature of different components within a media repertoire (Hasebrink and Domeyer 2012). By examining the relations of news uses to other media uses, researchers gain a deeper understanding of whether, and to what extent, news habits are shaped by other media uses. For instance, the use of entertainment media might either complement or compete with news use, affecting the overall media repertoire.

Finally, identifying patterns of similarity or divergence between platforms, sources and content types across news use and broader media uses provides insight into the factors that different users prioritize for different forms of media behavior. Understanding these patterns helps in tailoring news content and delivery methods to better meet the needs, interests and preferences of diverse audience segments.

The first research question can be formulated as follows:

RQ1: How prominent and diverse is news use within the identified media repertoires?

In answering this research question, we also pay attention to which interrelationships and patterns of similarity or divergence could be identified when analyzing news use within someone's media repertoire.

Enablers for News Use

Along with the expanded news supply, today's media environment pressures the relationship between journalism and audiences. Feelings of news fatigue (Gurr 2022), along with declining news interest (Picone et al. 2025), and growing distrust in media (Newman et al. 2025) are driving this shift, demanding new approaches to news production, distribution, and engagement (Truyens and Picone 2024).

Against this backdrop, it is important to understand which enablers underlie the prominent and/or diverse presence of news use in media repertoires, or the disablers that keep it limited. Previously, research often relied on the uses and gratifications (U&G) framework. According to U&G, people use (mass) media in a goal-oriented manner to satisfy specific needs and gratifications, such as seeking information or entertainment (Hanson and Haridakis 2008). Users then rationally evaluate which media are most successful in satisfying their needs at a given time, adjusting their consumption patterns accordingly (Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch 1973).

However, others have criticized this theory, which is often too motivation-oriented (see Ruggiero 2000 for an overview). One of its key assumptions is that people choose the media they perceive most valuable for fulfilling their needs, yet the research of Swart and colleagues (2017) reveals a more complex reality. Participants in their study did not necessarily use the news they regarded as most valuable most frequently, nor did they consider the news they used daily as the most important. Another key assumption of the theory is that media users are active agents who make deliberate choices about their media use, which overlooks habitual or passive media uses, often influenced by contextual factors, including incidental exposure to news (Strauß, Huber, and Gil de Zúñiga 2020) or personalized algorithm-driven recommendations (Wallace 2018). Finally, much U&G research focuses on identifying motivations for specific types of media uses among specific populations, such as motivations for viewing comedy or traditional news formats (Hanson and Haridakis 2008) or for fake news-sharing behavior among students (Wei, Nawi, and Naeem 2024), which often results in fragmented sets of motivations. This fragmentation can hinder the development of a cohesive theoretical framework (Ruggiero 2000), leading to inconsistency in motivations across distinct empirical studies. More importantly, it does not tell us how cross-media news use patterns take shape, and which set of motives dominate in this regard.

Although the importance of people's individual motivations (Ruggiero 2000) or personal interests (Yuan 2011) as enablers of news use cannot be denied, it is also necessary to account for contextual factors. Others too have attempted to understand news use beyond uses and gratifications. Schrøder and Steeg Larsen (2010), for instance, introduced the concept of "perceived worthwhileness", suggesting that people make a "personal calculation" (p.527) of which news media they consider worth consuming. According to Schrøder and Kobbernagel (2010), factors making news worthwhile include the price of the news or the situational or technological fit. Berthelsen and Hameleers (2021), in turn, concluded that young people select news only when they perceive it will require the right amount of personal effort. Moreover, Swart, Peters, and Broersma (2017) found how accessibility or normative pressures can play a role. Because many factors can enable or constrain news use, it is necessary to list and categorize them.

We approach the identification of people's enablers and disablers that help explain the prominence and diversity of their news use in a broad way. We include people's intrinsic motivations and preferences, as well as the contextual factors that are at play, thereby building upon and synthesizing existing frameworks, such as the U&G framework or the concept of "perceived worthwhileness":

RQ2a: What enablers and disablers help explain the prominence and diversity of news use within a media repertoire?

RQ2b: Which key enablers and disablers explain news use within the identified media repertoires?

Methodology

The present study is part of a research project on cross-media use in Flanders (Van Damme et al. 2023). We took a three-pronged approach to map six distinct media repertoires. Following the recommendation of Hasebrink and Popp (2006), we combined large-scale quantitative data (Phase 1) and interview data (Phase 2) to construct distinct media repertoires (Phase 3). The development of cross-media repertoires was guided by the Quadruple Articulation Framework (QAF) (Evens, Henderickx, and De Marez 2021; Van Damme and Evens 2025), which served as a methodological approach. Below, we briefly outline the mixed-methods steps.

Context of the Study

This study was conducted in Flanders, the Dutch-speaking region of Belgium. While Belgium also includes the French-speaking region of Wallonia, the media systems of both regions function largely independently. The Flemish media landscape can be situated within the Democratic-Corporatist model (Hallin and Mancini 2004). It is marked by a strong, highly trusted public service broadcaster (VRT), which continues to enjoy significant audience reach (Newman et al. 2025). VRT competes with two dominant commercial media organizations (Mediahuis and DPG Media) that operate both television channels and newspapers, contributing to a high level of media ownership concentration. Like many other markets, Flanders has experienced growing digitization and platformization of news use, with social media platforms playing an increasingly central role in news distribution, particularly among younger audiences (Hendrickx 2024). A previous news repertoire study (Van Damme 2017) found that “news practices in Flanders are very diverse” (317).

Three-Phase Study Design

Phase 1: Latent Class Analysis

Phase 1 utilized data from the imec.digimeter 2022 survey (De Marez et al. 2023) to define the preliminary set of media repertoires using Latent Class Analysis (LCA). This survey measures media use, media adoption, and attitudes toward technological developments among the Flemish population. Data collection occurred from September to November 2022, encompassing an online or paper survey conducted among 2.309 Flemish individuals aged 18–94. The sample is representative across gender, age, education level and place of residence (STATBEL 2022). LCA was employed to identify cases with similar media use patterns or media repertoires. Appendix 1 provides an overview of the data collection and analytical process. Appendix 2 shows an overview of all variables that were included in the analysis. At the end of this phase, seven classes of users with distinct media repertoires were identified. This preliminary set of seven media repertoires were

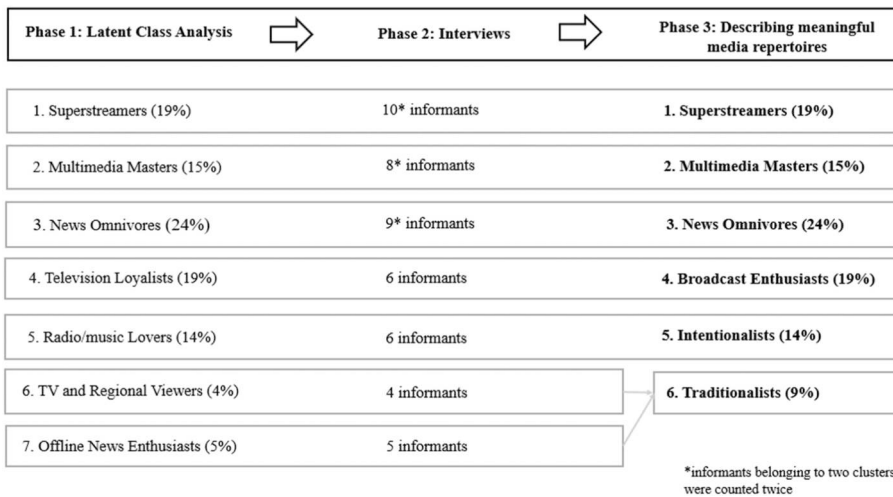


Figure 1. Development of the six media repertoires.

given a working title and description, and the sociodemographic characteristics of the users associated with each repertoire were collected (see [Figure 1](#) for an overview of these seven media repertoires, and their development in each phase).

Phase 2: Interviews

Phase 2 involved in-depth interviews with Flemish media users belonging to one of the seven classes identified in Phase 1. The informants were selected from the pool of respondents in Phase 1 who expressed willingness to participate in a follow-up study. In selecting informants, effort was made to ensure sufficient diversity in terms of class membership from Phase 1, as well as gender, age and education level (see [Appendix 3](#)). However, the follow-up question was only presented to respondents who completed the online survey, resulting in an underrepresentation of older individuals, who often belonged to classes characterized by more traditional media use. To address this gap, convenience sampling was employed to recruit informants fitting the descriptions of the two more traditional media repertoires. The final sample included 46 informants aged between 18 and 90 years old, of which 21 were male and 25 female. [Figure 1](#) provides the number of informants interviewed for each media repertoire. For a more detailed overview, including the class loadings and sociodemographic characteristics of the informants, see [Appendix 3](#).

Eight researchers received interview training and conducted 46 interviews between May and October 2023. The interviews lasted one and a half hours on average and took place online or at a location of the informant’s choice. The Quadruple Articulation Framework (QAF) strongly guided the topic guide, ensuring a systematic and in-depth exploration of people’s media and news use patterns. This framework states that media use occurs on four different layers that influence each other: platform, content, object and context. Each layer contains subcomponents that capture media use in more detail ([Van Damme and Evens 2025](#)). [Figure 2](#) showcases a schematic overview of the different layers and subcomponents of the QAF, described in more detail in [Appendix 4](#).



Figure 2. Visual representation of the Quadruple Articulation Framework.

The researchers first asked informants to describe a typical weekday and to specify how and when they engage with media. Subsequently, a card-sorting exercise was employed to delve deeper into the informants’ media use, which was helpful to articulate often unconscious media use practices (Conrad and Tucker 2018). The cards are color-coded, representing different subcomponents of the QAF, such as objects (orange: e.g., television, laptop), platforms (purple: e.g., Instagram, news app), genres (blue e.g., information, entertainment) and contexts (green: locations, e.g., outdoors; grey: e.g., together with company (see Figure 3)). First, informants selected the cards relevant to their media use. Next, they constructed meaningful combinations with the remaining cards (see Figure 4). During the interviews, news was considered a genre, which is a subcomponent of the content layer. News was broadly defined as “news and information about current affairs”, allowing informants to interpret it as they preferred. After composing all their



Figure 3. First step of card sorting by Sanne-F33: filtering of relevant cards.

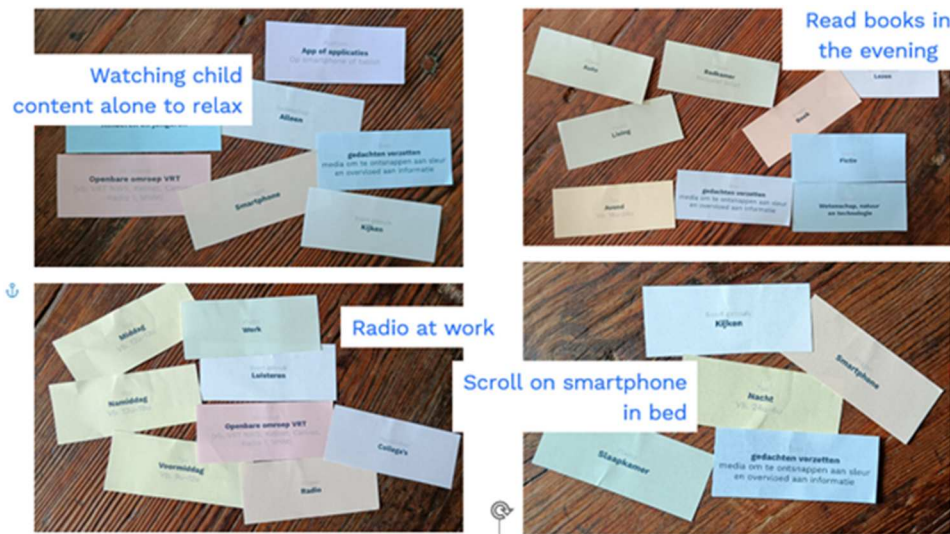


Figure 4. Four media articulations made by Sanne-F33.

different media uses, informants had to indicate which combinations they used more frequently, and which ones were the most important. The interviewers also explored in detail how the different layers of the QAF played a role and “articulated” in the informants’ identified media uses. Example questions include whether the media was often used in the presence of others (context layer) or which genres were found to be the most engaging overall (content layer). The interviews were thematically coded using NVivo (Clarke and Braun 2014). The topic guide can be found in Appendix 5.

Phase 3: Describing Meaningful Media Repertoires

The final phase combined the results of the quantitative and qualitative analyses to construct meaningful media repertoires. The seven media repertoires identified in Phase 1 were further elaborated and refined using detailed information from the interviews. Their descriptions were supplemented or adjusted accordingly, and final nicknames were assigned. While the LCA identified seven distinct classes in the quantitative research phase, we observed that the two smallest classes (5% and 4% of the sample) displayed very similar offline media use patterns and comparable sociodemographic characteristics. The sole distinction between these two was their attitude toward technology adoption. In order to ensure empirical robustness, we decided to merge the two into a single “Traditionalists” repertoire (see Figure 1).

Data Analysis

While the quantitative data mainly served as a skeleton to find the distinct repertoires, it was especially the interview data which allowed answering both research questions. After the interviews, the reading, watching, gaming, listening and news use behavior of each repertoire was examined and mapped on the QAF. This approach allowed us to understand the relation between news use and informants’ other media uses. We

identified their news use as prominent if they described their media use primarily by talking about the news (i.e., genre “news and information about current events”), often equating “media” to “news”. People’s news uses were considered diverse when they mentioned consuming news via a variety of devices, senders and platforms (see Evens, Henderickx, and De Marez 2021). Both what it means to have prominent and diverse news use are thus drawn from the interview data, enabling us to go beyond a sole quantitative operationalization of the key concepts. Finally, the researchers revisited the interview data to inductively code all factors informants’ mentioned that seemed to lead to certain uses, so-called enablers. Factors they mention for limiting or avoiding certain uses were thematically coded as disablers (Clarke and Braun 2014).

Results

We assessed the identified media repertoires on the prominence and diversity of news use (RQ1). Furthermore, we found multiple enablers and disablers of news use, which we subdivided into nine categories (RQ2a). While most of these categories are present in every user’s news use, we were able to pinpoint the key enablers and disablers specific to each repertoire (RQ2b).

Six Media Repertoires, Solely Two News-Oriented

Table 1 presents the six media repertoires, which are presented from more disruptive media use, in which social media and audiovisual streaming platforms dominate, to more traditional media use. We nicknamed them: Superstreamers, Multimedia Masters, News Omnivores, Broadcast Enthusiasts, Intentionalists and Traditionalists, based on the media practices that are central in their media repertoire.

Superstreamers: News Only Via Social Media

Superstreamers (19%) are digital media fans characterized by heavy use of YouTube, social media, and streaming platforms such as Netflix or Spotify (see Table 1, column 1).

Prominence and Diversity. Although Superstreamers frequently use digital media, news uses in their media repertoire are neither prominent nor diverse. Their news use is mainly limited to social media, predominantly on their smartphone. Hence, it is often an incidental rather than a deliberate activity. For example Gizem-F19 says “I won’t go looking for it [news] myself.”

I’m on Twitter a lot. Current affairs often show up there.

That’s how I find out what’s happening that day. (Kjel-M20)

Nonetheless, Superstreamers do consider themselves well-informed via these updates on social media. Notably, despite their preference for international media and content creators in their overall media use, Flemish news brands remain an important point of reference when it comes to news, particularly on social media. For example, Gizem-F19 mainly relies on news videos on TikTok, “especially those from VRT [public broadcaster]”.

Table 1. Schematic overview of the six media repertoires.

Media use	Disruptive media use			Traditional media use		
	Superstreamers 19%	Multimedia Masters 15%	News Omnivores 24%	Broadcast Enthusiasts 19%	Intentionalists 14%	Traditionalists 9%
Characteristics	Lots of streaming. No radio. News via social media	Lots of streaming. Little traditional media	Lots of streaming, Lots of radio, also TV	Television and radio dominant. Sporadic streaming	Intentional and attentive. Mainly linear and established media. Absence social media	Traditional media (television, radio, and print) dominant Minimal streaming
Top media	YouTube for targeted watching, Netflix for relaxation, Spotify during travel, social gaming.	Switch smoothly between streaming services. Little radio, but music via Spotify. Cross-media news use. Gaming for relaxation	News via different platforms and devices. Watch informative content and use various streaming services for this.	Watching TV for relaxation and to stay informed. Radio as background music and to stay informed.	Varies widely. Watching television via legacy media. Radio for music and news.	News through traditional media. Watching television, listening to the radio, and reading for relaxation or to stay informed
Primary objects Defining in repertoire	Smartphone Platforms	Smartphone Platforms	Flexible Content	TV/radio/smartphone Objects/Content	TV/radio Content	TV/paper Objects/Context
Role of news	News primarily via social media (Small) part of their social media use Limited	Mostly digital, via a variety of audiovisual platforms Side effect of their dense media use Very diverse	On a variety of platforms and devices In a variety of contexts Central in their media use Both prominent and diverse	Mostly via Traditional devices such as television and radio Important, but neither prominent nor diverse	No social media news Very intentional Depending on individual intentions Ranging from prominent to non- existing	Traditionally oriented Central in their media routine Prominent, not diverse
Key Enablers	Technological Social	Media use Technological Psychological	Psychological Cognitive Social	Habitual	Psychological Editorial	Habitual Psychological Cognitive
Socio demo	Balanced: M 49%—51% F Medium or highly educated: 40% higher education	More men: M 57%—43% F Highly educated: 50% higher education	Balanced: M 52%—48% F Highly educated: 46% higher education	More women: M 38%—62% F Short schooled: 24% higher education	More men: M 58%—42% F Rather short schooled: 32% higher education	More women: M 38%—62% F Short schooled: 26% higher education
Age (Average)	Youngest users: 31 years	Young users: 35 years	Middle aged: 55 years	Older users: 60 years	Older users: 63 years	Elders users: 72 years

Enablers and Disablers. Despite news use of Superstreamers being rather absent and limited, we identified key news use enablers. These enablers are technological and social. The constant availability and flexibility of the smartphone make it an ideal device for consuming different types of media, including news. Via social media, Superstreamers consume news that is tailored to the platforms and often categorized as entertainment (see Hendrickx 2024), more similar to the entertainment content and formats they are already regularly consuming.

The [news] videos on TikTok are quite short, allowing me to keep my attention. (Gizem-F19)

Algorithmic recommendations also act as a technological enabler for news use, as Superstreamers rely on algorithm-driven content discovery on platforms. These algorithms play an important role in keeping them up to date, and some deliberately check and scroll through social media “to be informed” (Tijmen-M24). Finally, their news use is driven by social enablers such as peer influence in the form of recommendations that help them discover content, or inform them about current events. Ilias-M32 states: “[I consume] only news through what people tell me and the news on the radio, but I don’t listen to the radio specifically for the news.”

Two key disablers emerge. First, some Superstreamers have the perception of being informed. They often feel that the news they encounter incidentally on social media or online is sufficient, reducing the perceived need to actively seek out news, with Belinay-F20 stating: “what I come across on the Internet is more than enough [news] for me”. Furthermore, they associate media use mainly with relaxation and clearing their heads, finding news “too depressive”, something to “forget and ignore” (Gizem-F19). As a consequence, their overall media use is typified by low-attentive media use, entertainment-oriented content, and low effort. Attention-driven news use, let alone the use of hard or negative news, fits little into this whole picture.

Multimedia Masters: All-Purpose Digital Media

Multimedia Masters (15%) feature a media repertoire characterized by heavy and varied use of multi- and cross-media for entertainment and information purposes. They engage with a wide range of content across multiple platforms, including streaming video, music, podcasts, social media, and gaming (see Table 1, column 2).

Prominence and Diversity. Multimedia Masters seem to balance heavy digital news use with the dominance of entertainment-focused media use. News use, while regular, does not occupy a prominent place as entertainment and other digital content accounts for heavy use as well. News is often used during breaks or idle moments, often as a complementary or follow-up activity to other (media) engagements. For example, Hannelore-F31 mentions: “During the small breaks at work I check news, Instagram and Facebook.”

Nonetheless, news use of Multimedia Masters is diverse. For example they engage with news via “newspaper or radio apps in the kitchen” (Flo-F18) or “podcasts” and “late night shows of America” (Falker-M41). Consistent with their overall media use, digital platforms dominate, with social media being the most frequently used news source, followed by news websites and digital newspapers.

Enablers and Disablers. A first enabler for Multimedia Masters' news use is their broader media use. More specifically, they encounter news via their media-dense repertoire and media subscriptions, like Flo-F18, who receives "a lot of news flashes on Instagram." Also, they are skilled in dealing with many types of media and technology. For instance, Falker-M41 adapts his use to specific circumstances: "When it's a world event, I consult De Redactie [Flemish news site] because you can read everything there." As a direct result of their frequent use of digital media, algorithms or "news notifications" (Annabel-F18) also enable news use.

In addition to these media use and technology enablers, Multimedia Masters have a high interest in various news topics and staying informed, which serves as an important psychological enabler. Simply being exposed to news is not enough, a spark of curiosity must be present before they decide to consume it. Falker-M41 explains: "I always start by scrolling. If I see an interesting headline, I open it to read the article."

When it comes to disablers, the prominent role of news use competes with other forms of entertainment media, which often play a more dominant role in their media habits. When asked what she could not miss in her media repertoire, Lisanne-F27 says

I don't think I could really do without the radio [including news updates]. But then I'd have little relaxation. So maybe I'd rather choose a streaming platform instead. I find relaxing more important. Maybe I'd end up throwing the radio overboard after all.

Also Annabel-F18 uses media "mainly to relax".

News Omnivores: News-Centered Repertoire

News Omnivores (24%) associate media use primarily with information gathering. Like Eline-F40, many defined "media" in terms of news: "[Media is] anything you can use to get information: TV, newspaper, internet, computer, radio." The centrality of news drives News Omnivores to seek informative content in multiple ways, including news via television, applications, websites, and streaming platforms (see [Table 1](#), column 3).

Prominence and Diversity. News omnivores exhibit a strong need to stay informed, resulting in the most prominent news use of all repertoires. News is essential, as informants emphasized during the interviews:

The most important thing for me is to keep up with what is happening.
Relaxation is important too, but I don't have much time for that. (Karolien-F53)

Their news use is also diverse, encompassing different media, channels and platforms. Although they mainly consume news digitally, News Omnivores also use traditional media. They subscribe to digital and print newspapers, listen to news podcasts and watch different types of news shows, such as newscasts or political talk shows. They get news from multiple news brands, like Elisa-F45:

I regularly visit De Standaard, De Tijd [Flemish quality newspapers] and also VRT NWS [Flemish public broadcaster]. Sometimes I also look at regional news, via the Gazet van Antwerpen [local newspaper].

Enablers and Disablers. A multitude of enablers underlie the prominent and diverse news use of News Omnivores. The central enabler is their desire to be informed, to "better understand the world" (Stefan-M49).

While all the repertoires express this desire, the News Omnivores go a step further, as being informed seems to be a part of their identity, something that helps them build their self-image. Frequent news use is as much about the desire to know useful things, as it is about the importance of being an “informed citizen”, with news being more valued than entertainment.

I have no interest whatsoever in what happens in *Thuis* [Flemish soap series].
I'm only interested in important things [referring to news]. (Stefan-M49)

It is very important to stay informed. Many people talk without really realizing what they're talking about. (Fernand-M71)

Related to this is the social value of news. News Omnivores often find themselves in a social environment that considers it important to be informed. They repeatedly mention the normative pressures to keep up to date. As Elisa-F45 states: “We [colleagues] talk about a lot of things. If you want to be part of the conversation, you need to be informed.”

Finally, their high personal interest in news triggers them to dig deeper into specific news topics. For example, An-F52 limits her news use to scanning the front page of the newspaper, and reads news stories in the middle of the paper if she is “really interested.”

Given their prominent and diverse news use, news omnivores have very few disablers. They are however critical of news coverage. If they consider news items from a particular source or news topic to be of lower quality or less important, as Fernand (M-71) who states “sports is a secondary and news is life”, they will not consume it either:

VTM [Flemish commercial broadcaster] is too much sensationalism. If you compare the news between channels, they are very different. (Fernand-M71)

Broadcast Enthusiasts: Preference for Slow Media

Broadcast Enthusiasts (19%) are primarily traditional media users. They have a strong preference for slower and offline media, such as television, radio, and books. However, they do not shy away from using digital media content (see [Table 1](#), column 4).

Prominence and Diversity. In line with their overall media use, Broadcast Enthusiasts are committed to daily, slower news, via traditional channels. While news use is definitely part of the repertoire, it is mainly a by-product of their existing radio and television use. As Dirk-M65 states: “I want to be informed, but I do not want an overdose of information.”

We have a subscription to *De Standaard* [quality newspaper]. During the week it's digital-only and I don't look at it. On weekends, it's in paper form, and then I scan through it, but not very thoroughly. (Sanne-F33)

Due to their limited use of digital news, their news use is less diverse compared to other repertoires, such as the News Omnivores or Multimedia Masters.

Enablers and Disablers. Broadcast Enthusiasts cite their daily routine as key enabler for their news use. Their media and news use is highly routinized, or as Marieclaire-F61 puts it, “mostly the same every day”. Consequently, they stick to the same news sources, illustrated by Dirk-M65 who reads quality newspapers *De Standaard* and *De Morgen* every day and always listens to Radio 1.

An important disabler to diverse news use among this repertoire is their traditional and therefore somewhat limited media use. They do not have the interest or need to navigate the digital media landscape.

I try to keep my old smartphone for as long as possible. If I want to download a [news] app with audiovisual content, my phone crashes. I only use [the smartphone] to make calls or for WhatsApp. (Joran-M24)

Intentionalists: Quality-Seeking Media Users

In contrast to other media users —where repertoires are shaped by shared media practices— Intentionalists (14%) are characterized by their abstention from specific media uses: they are not on social media, nor do they play games. What Intentionalists have in common is their intentional and attentive media use and preference for what they perceive as “high-quality media” (see Table 1, column 5).

Prominence and Diversity. Like their overall media use, their news use is intentional and attentive. Each media use is a conscious choice to satisfy a need. Jonas-M55 states the following about economic news:

You need news to understand everything better.
It's all connected politically and economically. (Jonas-M55)

Because each user has different needs, motivations, and opinions, there is no typical news use among Intentionalists. Instead, they have a dual attitude toward news. While some are self-claimed “news addicts” (Jonas-M55), others choose to avoid news:

When I read too much [news], I feel influenced by other opinions and I feel a little manipulated. [...] I will not be brainwashed. I am open to other opinions, but I have my own opinion. (Dawid-M58)

This makes it difficult to determine whether news use is a prominent or absent part of their media repertoire. One big similarity between their news and media use is their preference for Flemish news brands (their beacon of trust and quality), and their negative attitude toward social media.

I prefer the VRT [Public broadcaster] app because of its daily content and the links (Dawid-M58)

Enablers and Disablers. Intentionalists' news use enablers are mainly editorial. They “like to be well and correctly informed,” (Jonas-M55) but only via reliable sources. Consequently, they will mainly consume news content of sources to which they ascribe positive evaluations, ensuring that their informational needs are met. For example, Jonas-M55 uses De Standaard [Flemish quality newspaper] and The Guardian because these brands “provide very good analysis.” Wim-M36 explains: “

VRT, VTM, Radio1 and Radio2: I trust these channels and their news. I value their years of experience.”

On the other hand, negative experiences with news act as disablers, which can lead them to ignore news altogether. Examples include Wim-M36 who does not want to

consume popular newspapers because they are “too sensational”, or Luc-M69 who avoids news because there is “too much negativity.”

Traditionalists: Creatures of Habit

Traditionalists (9%) have the most traditionally oriented repertoire. They are creatures of habit, strongly adhering to tradition and their daily routines, and they prefer media that they have been familiar with for a longer period. As a result, their media use is mainly “limited” to traditional devices such as television, radio or print, and well-known, mainstream Flemish media brands (see Table 1, column 6).

Prominence and Diversity. News use occupies a prominent place in the media repertoire of Traditionalists and closely mirrors their overall media use. Many with this repertoire are retired and implicitly mention how the fixed times of the news give structure to their day:

Yes I keep track of time. If it's almost 8 o'clock, I turn on Radio 2 [Radio show of public broadcaster] for the Belgian news. (Pico-M90)

News is often the central node around which the rest of their media routine is built. An evening of relaxing television viewing starts with the news broadcast, or the radio is turned on in the morning for the first news highlights of the day. Some of them describe it as a “standard routine” (Evi-F39), and stress how difficult it is to break it:

I usually read the paper in the morning. In the evening I look online again.
But I still read [newspapers], out of attachment, out of habit, out of tradition.
One morning, I hadn't received it. I drove to [a local town]'s post office and there I got one.
[...] I can't live without a newspaper. (Sebastiaan-M63)

Their news use is similar to their media use, as they also prefer traditional media for their news use and rely on Flemish news brands. Traditionalists' news use patterns are less diverse, as their media use does not include much digital media.

Enablers and Disablers. The most important enabler for Traditionalists is news use being a very important part of their daily routine, even structuring their day. Some even explain feeling lost when this daily routine gets disrupted.

Yes, because we've been getting it [Newspaper] for free all our lives. If I haven't read it, my day isn't complete. Then I will pick something up again later in the day. Just to be a little bit informed. (Guus-M71)

Their longstanding familiarity with certain news sources, brands or traditional devices is a key factor that makes them valuable to Traditionalists. Their loyalty to certain sources means that they will continue to consume them frequently.

We always watch VRT [public broadcaster]. We almost never watch the news on VTM [commercial broadcaster]. It's kind of a tradition. (Marie-F63)

In addition, psychological enablers are also strongly present among Traditionalists. They often mention that they are “very interested in sports and politics” (Lode-M67) or “curious about what happens in the village” (Sebastiaan-M63). This interest increases their use of certain news and topics. They also feel a strong need to learn or enrich themselves.

For example, Evi-F39 describes news as “nourishment.” They mention how news keeps them informed about society and provides useful information about local events, marriages (Wilfried-M83) or gas prices (Pico-M90).

This habitual news use also acts as a disabler limiting their news use to traditional media, as the reluctance of some Traditionalists to adopt unfamiliar media results in less diverse news use patterns. For example, when asked why they don’t read a certain newspaper at home, Evi (F39) answers “I think that evolved historically. No one at home used to read it.” Some Traditionalists are unskilled to use digital media, which also limits their news use in terms of diversity.

Nine Categories of News Use Enablers

Combining these insights, we identified nine different categories of news use enablers across these media repertoires. Some are deeply rooted intrinsic or personal motivations, while others are more contextually driven (see Figure 5). The complex interplay of the



Enabler	Characteristics and related literature
Psychological Someone’s personality, interest in news, personal preferences, individual motivations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interest or curiosity in news (Yuan, 2011; Swart et al., 2017) • Media preferences (Van Damme et al., 2023) • Identity and self-image linked to being an informed citizen (Swart et al., 2017)
Cognitive Intellectual and educational reasons for news use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for information (Hanson & Haridakis, 2008) • News as a tool for making informed decisions (Swart et al., 2017; Schroder and Kobbemagel, 2010)
Media use Factors that increase news use through broader media engagement, or being media literate to navigate complex media landscapes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broader media habits that influence news use (Skovsgaard & Andersen, 2020; Swart et al., 2017) • Presence of media and digital literacy (Kong et al., 2021)
Habitual Existence of daily routines or traditions in which the use of news plays an important role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News use rooted in daily routines (Groot Kormelink, 2022) • Familiarity with news practices (Edgerly, 2015; Swart et al., 2017) • News socialization (Edgerly et al., 2018)
Editorial Existence of qualitative and reliable news and journalism that people feel comfortable seeking out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of qualitative and reliable news and journalism in one’s media landscape • Credibility and trustworthiness of news (Yuan, 2011)
Social Direct and indirect social context influencing news use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer recommendations (Anderson, 2024; Van Damme et al., 2023) • News consumption in the company of others (Van Damme et al., 2023) • News community and social connection (Anderson, 2024; Palmer & Toff, 2020) • Normative pressures (Swart et al., 2017)
Accessibility Contextual factors that increase someone’s access to news use, such as the price of news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Price, time available (Schroder and Kobbemagel, 2010; Swart et al., 2017). • Availability and visibility of news (Groot Kormelink, 2022) • Incidental news exposure (Strauß et al., 2020)
Technological Platforms or devices that make it easier to access or be exposed to news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personalization, recommendations (Strauß et al., 2020; Wallace, 2018; Van Damme et al., 2015) • Attractiveness and user-friendliness (Schroder and Kobbemagel, 2010). • Alerts and notifications (Groot Kormelink, 2022)
Situational Situational circumstances influencing news use (e.g., important events in the news)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important events in the news, breaking news (Van Aelst et al., 2021) • Situational circumstances such as bad weather

Figure 5. Overview of the identified categories of news use enablers.

presence or absence of these categories helps enable or disable news use for each user in a unique way. Each enabler reflects a broader category consisting of various subcomponents or characteristics that linked to previous studies. Finally, while we distinguish the key enablers and disablers for each user's repertoire in the results section, our analysis revealed additional enablers that were common to all repertoires, such as the situational enabler.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was twofold. Firstly, we tried to understand news use by examining it in relation to someone's overall media repertoire. Our findings reveal how intertwined news and media use are, challenging research on news use only (e.g., Molyneux 2018; Van Damme et al. 2015). Across the six identified media repertoires, people's news use is closely aligned with their media routines, suggesting that the choice of a particular device or platform to consume news is contextual or personal rather than driven by content or news-specific factors. That said, there are some exceptions. Most notably, Superstreamers do not engage with Flemish brands in their overall media use, but do rely on them when seeking reliable information on current events, suggesting they actively differentiate between sources for different purposes and trust Flemish news brands.

Our data also enables to analyze the prominence and diversity of news use patterns in relation to broader media use, referring to the dominance of news use compared to other media use, and the variety of devices, platforms and sources used within one's news use. News turns out to play a prominent role in only two of the six identified media repertoires: the News Omnivores, who feel the urge to stay informed, and the Traditionalists, whose news use is strongly integrated into their daily routines. For others, news is less prominent or popped up as a by-product of other media uses. In addition, news use appears to be diverse in two repertoires: the News Omnivores and the Multimedia Masters. Both repertoires use a variety of sources, platforms and devices for news, in different spatio-temporal settings. The latter is remarkable: while Multimedia Masters show a strong interest in using a diverse array of news, their overall media use is focused on seeking content for relaxation, helping explain the less prominent role of news use in this repertoire.

Second, this study identified the enablers that underlie the prominence and diversity of people's news use patterns. These are personal and contextual factors that help explain the likelihood of news practices in someone's daily life, by increasing their value or providing easier access to news. These enablers should not be interpreted as nudges designed to steer people's news use, but rather as inherent personal and contextual factors that naturally shape the prominence and diversity of different news use patterns as they are. We have grouped them into nine categories that do not operate independently of each other, but influence each other and in some cases overlap. Other researchers too have strived to explain news uses, such as the U&G framework focusing on individual needs (Ruggiero 2000) or the idea of "perceived worthwhileness" mapping the importance of contextual factors (Schröder and Steeg Larsen 2010). Our categorization offers an important step toward a more comprehensive framework that integrates both internal and external drivers of news use, aiming to synthesize existing theories in a more coherent and holistic way. It is comprehensive in that it captures enablers and

disablers related to both the prominence and diversity of cross-media news use, across different audience segments. Future studies utilizing this comprehensive framework can help us further understand which categories of enablers dominate across different types of media uses or contexts.

In this study, there was a difference in which news use enablers are relevant within different media repertoires. Repertoires with prominent news use—specifically the News Omnivores and Traditionalists—are driven by strong personal motivations to seek out news, including a strong need to stay informed and be an informed citizen, or having a high interest in different news topics. Notably, the enablers identified as important for prominent news use closely match the factors highlighted by Swart, Peters, and Broersma (2017) that make news personally important to someone (e.g., news that reinforces one’s identity, aligns with one’s interests). In contrast, Superstreamers show a more limited and less engaged approach to news use, relying on contextual factors, such as algorithmic curation, rather than intrinsic motivations. These contextual factors alone appear insufficient to establish robust and consistent news use patterns. Moreover, habitual and routine-based consumption is emphasized as a significant enabler of news habits among older users.

This study focused on prominent and diverse news use, but to what extent is this necessary? Based on our findings, people with prominent news use tend to value staying informed via different sources including traditional media, have a high interest in different news topics, and feel motivated to enrich themselves via news. Previous research has concluded that greater use of traditional media for news contributes the most to people’s knowledge of current affairs (Beckers et al. 2021), that people with a high intrinsic need for orientation use more hard news (Martin and Sharma 2023), and that intrinsic motivations are crucial for developing news literacy (Tamboer, Kleemans, and Daalmans 2022). Prominent news use enables a shared window to the world, keeping users up to date about their surroundings. Therefore, these intrinsic enablers seem necessary from a democratic and societal perspective.

Regarding diversity, multiple studies highlight the positive outcomes of exposure to news diversity, such as its depolarizing effect (Heitz et al. 2022) or its ability to increase democratic participation and cultural exchange (Helberger 2012). However, these studies mainly focus on the benefits of content diversity, including diverse perspectives, topics and demographics covered, rather than diversity in terms of use practices. Our findings suggest that limited news use does not necessarily equate to limited information intake or a narrow perspective. When analyzing broader media use, it turned out that many repertoires engage with, learn and draw inspiration from a wide range of media uses that extend beyond the genre of “news and information about current affairs”.

Of course, this study is not without limitations. First, people’s media and news use patterns were identified based on self-report data. This is not without risks, as Prior (2009) found that audiences tend to overreport their news use in surveys, leading to biased and inflated results. Second, although several studies on news use conclude that what is considered news is changing (e.g., Swart, Peters, and Broersma 2017), this reconceptualization is less evident in this study. Future media repertoire research should focus more on what people consider “informative” (Swart et al. 2022). Finally, the study was conducted within the Flemish media context. This means that some of the findings,

particularly those relating to the characteristics of the specific media repertoires identified, may not be applicable to other media cultures. Nonetheless, we argue that our approach to examining the prominence and diversity of news use within media repertoires, along with our enablers-and-disablers framework, offers a valuable theoretical and analytical lens for audience researchers.

To conclude, our findings highlight the complexity and diversity of people's news use patterns, reinforcing the need for news organizations to adopt more personalized engagement strategies. Given the media repertoire-dependent nature of news use enablers and disablers, tailored approaches are needed to lower barriers for news use and (re)spark news interest. To achieve this, users must remain central to journalistic practice, which requires understanding how and why people use news and what enables or hinders them from doing so.

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Ethical Statement

Our study complied with applicable ethical standards. A data management plan was developed in accordance with university guidelines to ensure the safe handling of personal data. In addition, all participants gave informed consent, were fully aware of the objectives of the study, and consented to the publication of their pseudonymized data in scientific journals.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Survey: Data Collection and Latent Class Analysis

Phase 1 utilized data from the imec.digimeter 2022 survey (De Marez et al. 2023) to define the preliminary set of media repertoires using Latent Class Analysis. Data collection occurred from September to November 2022, encompassing a survey conducted among 2.309 Flemish individuals aged 18 to 94. 51% of the sample was female. The majority of respondents were recruited via the National Register to mitigate self-selection bias and received an invitation letter to participate in the online study. Older participants with fewer digital skills and/or access to digital technology were given the opportunity to fill in a shortened paper version of the questionnaire. Additional recruitment was conducted through partner organizations and an online panel. The sample is representative across gender, age, education level and place of residence (STATBEL 2022).

Latent Class Analysis (LCA) was employed to identify cases with similar media usage patterns, thereby grouping them into classes. LCA is a statistical technique that uncovers invisible subgroups characterized by similar responses to categorical variables (Weller et al. 2020). LCA itself indicates how many classes can best be retained from the data, and bases this on mathematical criteria, such as the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) and Akaike Information Criterion (AIC), but also on theoretical interpretability (Nylund-Gibson and Choi 2018). We then obtained the probability index for all respondents, indicating the degree of probability that they fit into the various classes identified (Weller et al. 2020) (see Appendix 3). The analysis was performed on variables that capture users' cross-media use best, like their viewing, listening, gaming, reading, and news use behaviors, with a particular focus on the objects and platforms they use, and the frequency of their use (see Appendix 2).

The table below summarizes the outcomes of the LCA models ranging from 1 to 7 latent classes. The log-likelihood values, AIC and BIC consistently improve as the number of latent classes increases, suggesting a better model fit. Furthermore, inspection of the class sizes supports the choice of retaining 7 media repertoires. This choice effectively balances detailed user segmentation with methodological rigor and interpretability.

Table A1. Summarization of the LCA models.

Latent Classes	Parameters	Log-likelihood	AIC	BIC	Residual df	G ² (Deviance)	X ² Goodness-of-fit
1	420	-193571.2	387982.3	390395.0	1889	351377.9	6.58e + 92
2	841	-165512.8	332707.6	337538.8	1468	295261.2	6.69e + 65
3	1262	-157640.8	317805.5	325055.1	1047	279517.1	3.77e + 54
4	1683	-153897.4	311160.8	320828.9	626	272030.4	4.57e + 52
5	2104	-151436.8	307081.6	319168.2	205	267109.2	2.46e + 52
6	2525	-150348.8	305747.6	320252.6	-216	264933.2	1.18e + 49
7	2946	-149494.8	304881.6	321805.1	-637	263225.2	2.63e + 48

Appendix 2. Latent Class Analysis Variables

Topic	Question + items
Social media	How frequently do you use these social media platforms? <i>I don't know them; Never to Rarely; Monthly; Weekly; Daily</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook • Twitter • LinkedIn • Instagram • Pinterest • Reddit • Tinder or another dating app • TikTok • Hoplr • BeReal

(Continued)

Continued.

Topic	Question + items
Viewing <i>Streaming</i>	What online sources did you use to watch videos in the past month? You can indicate multiple answers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YouTube Premium • YouTube • Vimeo • Social media • News websites • VT.M. GO • VRT. Right away • GoPlay • Provider website or app • Netflix • Disney+ • Apple TV+ • Streamz • Amazon Prime Video • Via illegal site or platform • Gaming Videos
Casting	How often do you cast movies, series, videos or TV shows to your TV screen? <i>I don't know/understand; Never; Seldom; Monthly; Weekly; Daily</i>
Listening <i>Radio frequency</i> <i>Radio devices</i>	How often do you listen to the radio? It doesn't matter which device you use to listen. By 'radio' we mean listening to radio stations. <i>Never to Daily</i> Which devices do you use to listen to the radio at least once a month? You can indicate multiple answers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Car • Radio set (FM/AM reception) • DAB or DAB + device (radio device that receives the channels digitally and not via FM/AM) • Computer (= fixed computer or laptop) • Smartphone • -Tablet • TV set (e.g., radio channels on your digital TV) • Audio streamer/smart speaker • None of the above • I don't listen to the radio every month
Music	Which devices do you use to listen to music at least once a month? By 'music' we don't mean listening to radio stations. Specify all devices you use to listen to music. You can indicate multiple answers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical objects (e.g., CD, LP or cassette) • Mobile (e.g., smartphone, tablet) • Wearable (e.g., smart watch) • Computer, laptop • -Television • Other, namely: _____ • I don't listen to music on a monthly basis
Music	Which sources do you use to listen to music at least once a month? You can indicate multiple answers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spotify • YouTube • Soundcloud • Apple Music • iTunes • TunelN Radio • Deezer
Topic <i>Podcasts</i>	Question + items How often do you listen to podcasts? <i>I don't know; Never to Rarely; Monthly; Weekly; Daily</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spotify • YouTube • Apple Music • iTunes • Soundcloud • TunelN Radio • Deezer • Other: _____

(Continued)

Continued.

Topic	Question + items
Gaming	<p>Which of the following activities do you do (at least) monthly? You can indicate multiple answers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playing a game on a game console • Playing a game on a computer • Playing a game on a tablet • Playing a game on my smartphone • eSports tracking • Tracking gamers' streams • Meeting up with friends to play a game online • I don't do any of the above activities on a monthly basis
News use <i>Sources</i>	<p>How often do you use the sources or devices below to follow the news? <i>Never to Daily</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper newspaper • Paper magazine • National TV via the television set • Regional TV via the television set • Online apps on your smart TV • Computer • Smartphone • Tablet • Radio
<i>Digital news</i>	<p>How often do you use the digital channels below to follow the news? <i>Never to Daily</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News media apps • Social media • Customizable news apps • Digital version of newspaper or magazine • News websites • News items on the home screen of laptop, smartphone or internet browser • TV news via a website or app • General search engine • Alerts via e-mail and newsletters • Via messaging apps
<i>Influencers</i>	<p>Do you follow influencers or vloggers who post videos online? <i>Yes, No; I don't know</i></p>

Appendix 3. Informant Matrix of Interview Study

Pseudonym	Sociodemographic characteristics						LCA factor loads							
	Gender	Age	Education	Profession	1	2	3	4	5	6	3	4	5	6
1. Superstreamers	Ilias	M	32	Secondary	Working	0,996	0,002	0,000	0,033	0,001	0,003	0,000	0,001	0,003
	Belina	F	20	Secondary	Student	0,978	0,060	0,001	0,003	0,000	0,003	0,001	0,000	0,007
	Babette	F	22	Bachelor	Student	0,931	0,000	0,001	0,085	0,000	0,004	0,001	0,000	0,005
	Brecht*	M	18	Secondary	Student	0,936	0,001	0,000	0,608	0,000	0,005	0,000	0,000	0,005
	Gizem	F	19	Secondary	Student	0,911	0,016	0,000	0,034	0,000	0,016	0,000	0,000	0,016
	Kjel	M	20	Secondary	Student	0,903	0,011	0,001	0,173	0,000	0,007	0,001	0,000	0,007
	Hilke	F	30	Bachelor	Working	0,820	0,002	0,050	0,333	0,000	0,002	0,050	0,000	0,002
	Mila	F	22	Bachelor	Student	0,692	0,111	0,061	0,037	0,000	0,005	0,061	0,000	0,005
	Tijmen	M	24	Master	Working	0,163	0,018	0,094	0,149	0,001	0,093	0,094	0,001	0,093
	Lisa	F	43	Master	Student	0,121	0,018	0,120	0,107	0,007	0,001	0,120	0,007	0,001
2. Broadcast Enthusiasts	Marieclaire	F	61	Secondary	Retired	0,023	0,992	0,002	0,000	0,001	0,012	0,002	0,001	0,012
	Joran	M	24	Master	Parttime work	0,156	0,656	0,002	0,005	0,005	0,003	0,002	0,005	0,003
	Jacob	M	50	Master	Working	0,448	0,512	0,004	0,021	0,002	0,003	0,004	0,002	0,003
	Dirk	M	65	Master	Retired	0,013	0,332	0,086	0,026	0,007	0,002	0,086	0,007	0,002
	Siamak	M	50	Bachelor	Not Working	0,003	0,373	0,148	0,072	0,005	0,004	0,148	0,005	0,004
	Sanne	F	33	Master	Working	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
3. News Omnivores	Elisa	F	45	Master	Working	0,001	0,008	0,948	0,089	0,000	0,003	0,948	0,000	0,003
	Stefan	M	49	Bachelor	Working	0,031	0,011	0,914	0,006	0,000	0,002	0,914	0,000	0,002
	Fernand	M	71	Bachelor	Retired	0,001	0,186	0,911	0,010	0,000	0,003	0,911	0,000	0,003
	Eline	F	40	Master	Working	0,032	0,000	0,798	0,109	0,000	0,001	0,798	0,000	0,001
	An	F	52	Bachelor	Parttime work	0,001	0,018	0,758	0,021	0,039	0,001	0,758	0,039	0,001
	Catho	F	54	Bachelor	Working	0,004	0,010	0,624	0,126	0,001	0,010	0,624	0,001	0,010
	Karolien	F	53	Bachelor	Parttime work	0,002	0,267	0,519	0,001	0,016	0,002	0,519	0,001	0,002
	Falker*	M	41	Master	Working	0,001	0,002	0,517	0,578	0,009	0,006	0,517	0,009	0,006
	Claire	F	56	Bachelor	Not Working	0,013	0,030	0,176	0,045	0,017	0,007	0,176	0,017	0,007
4. Multimedia Masters	Hannelore	F	31	Master	Working	0,032	0,000	0,026	0,966	0,000	0,008	0,026	0,966	0,000
	Annel	F	18	Bachelor	Student	0,016	0,000	0,042	0,941	0,000	0,004	0,042	0,941	0,000
	Flo	F	18	Secondary	Student	0,347	0,000	0,013	0,910	0,000	0,001	0,013	0,910	0,000
	Lisanne	F	27	Master	Working	0,285	0,011	0,001	0,849	0,000	0,003	0,001	0,849	0,000
	Daan	M	45	Master	Working	0,197	0,001	0,024	0,603	0,000	0,002	0,024	0,603	0,000
	Lotje	F	28	Master	Working	0,157	0,001	0,071	0,770	0,000	0,005	0,071	0,770	0,000
	Brecht*	M	18	Secondary	Student	0,936	0,001	0,000	0,608	0,000	0,005	0,000	0,608	0,000
	Falker*	M	41	Master	Working	0,001	0,002	0,517	0,578	0,009	0,006	0,517	0,578	0,006
	Jonas	M	55	Bachelor	Working	0,003	0,011	0,011	0,000	0,935	0,001	0,011	0,000	0,935

(Continued)



Continued.

Pseudonym	Sociodemographic characteristics			LCA factor loads							
	Gender	Age	Education	Profession	1	2	3	4	5	6	
5. Intentionalists	Luc	M	69	Master	Retired	0,002	0,006	0,010	0,001	0,932	0,001
	Dawid	M	58	Master	Working	0,001	0,031	0,001	0,000	0,931	0,000
	Lara	F	42	Master	Parttime work	0,007	0,083	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,916
6. Traditionalists	Wim	M	36	Bachelor	Working	0,076	0,019	0,003	0,001	0,906	0,001
	Charline	F	34	Bachelor	Working	0,011	0,002	0,048	0,001	0,905	0,000
	Evi	F	39	Master	Working	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Elaine	F	70	Secondary	Retired	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Guus	M	71	Secondary	Retired	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Sebastiaan	M	63	Bachelor	Retired	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Wilfried	M	83	Secondary	Retired	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Lode	M	67	Secondary	Retired	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Pico	M	90	Secondary	Retired	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Inges	F	88	Secondary	Retired	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	
María	F	63	Master	Retired	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	

*Two respondents had high factor loads (+ 0.5) on two classes.

Appendix 4. Different Layers of the Quadruple Articulation Framework

The quadruple articulation framework (QAF) of Evens, Henderickx, and De Marez (2021) deconstructs media use into four articulations: content, platform, device, and context. Authors (in review) have previously enhanced this framework by broadening it from audiovisual content to all media uses, and by concretizing these articulations into different subcomponents, including formats or genres, input and output devices, and five subcomponents that describe the emotional and physical context of media use. In the present study, we employed QAF in our methodological approach.

Platform-layer refers to the digital service through which the media content is consumed. These can be video streaming platforms such as Netflix or Spotify, but also social media platforms (e.g., TikTok), audio platforms (e.g., Spotify), websites (e.g., Google.com) or applications (e.g., YouTube). This layer is relevant only if the media content is digital.

Content refers to the media product itself that is being used. Subcomponents within this layer are the actual message that is conveyed (e.g., a particular news story); the genre of the content (e.g., entertainment or informational); the sender of the content (e.g., an influencer, journalist or media brand); and the format (e.g., text or audio; long form or short form).

The object layer consists of the devices used to consume the media content, which can be either digital (e.g., smartphone, tablet) or analog (e.g., a newspaper).

Finally, **context** constantly influences the way in which media is used through the three layers mentioned above. Although the context of an individual's media use can be interpreted very broadly, such as the media ecosystem or the generation in which one finds oneself, this framework limits it to the personal context of the individual. According to (Authors, in review) this context consists of the external context (e.g., the time and place of media use, the presence of company), but also the internal context (e.g., the extent to which someone is attentive, has the intention to use media, etc.). The motivations or meaning-making that lead an individual to use certain media are also part of the internal context.

Appendix 5. Interview Topic Guide

Introduction

Hello

My name is [name of researcher], and I'm a researcher at [employer of researcher]. First of all, **thank you so much** for taking the time to join this study.

This interview is part of **a project** [anonymized for peer review]

In this study, we're talking to different people about which media they listen to, watch, or read—and especially *why*. The interview will take about an hour and, if you agree to the conditions in the informed consent, will be recorded so we can analyse it later.

Before we get started, I'd like to quickly go through a short document that explains your rights as a participant. [Go through, tick off, and sign **informed consent**]

Okay, we're all set to begin. Just so you know, **there are no right or wrong answers**. I'm interested in your *real* opinion—not what you think we might want to hear. And if you have any questions or comments at any time, please feel free to share them.

Do you have any questions before we start?

Opening Questions

Before we get started: in this conversation we'll be talking about **media**. What do you personally understand by the word "media"? What comes to mind when you hear it?

- Okay, thank you.
- When I ask about **your media**, I mean all kinds of media we use to inform ourselves or to relax—for example, videos on social media, newspapers, TV series you binge-watch, games you play ... This includes established media (such as radio broadcasters, television, print media, and gaming)

as well as alternative and “digital-only” media. We’re *not* talking about all (online) communication, such as (group) messages or personal conversations, and not everything on social media falls under our definition. Media makers—including “content creators” or “influencers”—who are active on social media and address a broader audience *are* included.

- You don’t need to remember this definition, but it might help as we go along to know the kinds of things we’re interested in.
- In this conversation, we’ll mainly focus on the **content of the media** (what it’s about) and the **context in which you encounter** it. We’ll also, though to a lesser extent, touch on the **devices and platforms** you use to access that content.

Introductory Questions

I’m going to start with a very general question. Could you describe a typical weekday in your life, from the moment you wake up until the moment you go to bed? What do you do for work, and how do you spend your free time?

- As we go through that typical weekday, can you indicate when you encounter media?

[Try to stay as closely as possible to the day the informant just described.

For example: you said you wake up in the morning with the radio on. How actively do you listen to it?

Later at breakfast, is the radio still on? Do you check your smartphone in the morning? When you go to work by bike, do you listen to anything along the way?]

- How does a weekend day differ from a weekday?
- If we go through a typical weekend day, can you indicate when you encounter media?
- Are there any **media you pay for**? For example, a subscription to a news outlet or a streaming service? Or do you sometimes buy individual items, like a magazine or a game?
 - **Why** do you pay for these media? (What role do they play in your life; why do you consider it important to pay for them?)
 - Do you **access** paid content because someone else shares a password with you, or through work?

Transition Questions – Card Sort Exercise

Now that I have a better idea of what *you* understand by “media” and when you typically come into contact with media during the day, I’d like to go a bit deeper.

I have here a set of cards, each **showing different aspects of media use**. We have cards about genres, devices, platforms, but also about where, when, and with whom you engage with media. Each “type” of card has a different color. The idea is to work with these cards to create combinations that often occur in your media use. Let’s start by sorting out the cards that are relevant or important to you.

- Go through all the cards and remove the ones this person does not use or do
- Ask if there are any aspects missing from the cards, and write them down on blank cards
- At the end, take a picture

“Non-Use” Cards. Let’s begin with the cards you’ve removed. Could you tell me why you don’t find these relevant?

Combinations of Cards. Now let’s continue with the cards you’ve kept.

The goal here is to combine the aspects of media use that often go together in your life. Earlier, you mentioned [go through example combination from the daily routine exercise] and [second example].

It might be easiest to start with one color of cards. What works best for you—starting with moments of the day, like we just did earlier, or maybe with devices? Or perhaps starting from activities like reading or watching?

Take your time to create the combinations. For the recording, I'd like to ask you to read each card out loud and explain your thought process as you go—especially how, when, with whom, and why you choose that card and make that combination.

- Help the participant now and then by referring back to things they mentioned earlier.

Once you have all your combinations in front of you, do you feel we've covered everything? Are there any other aspects or combinations that are relevant to you? Or is there anything missing?

- Take a picture at the end.

Top 3 – Frequency and Importance

I have two more sets of cards. Again, I'd like to ask you to think out loud so I can follow your reasoning.

- Which of these combinations happen most often in your life? Could you create a top 3 of the most frequent ones?
 - What factors influence whether you choose to use certain media or not?
- Sometimes there's a difference between what you do most often and what you find most important. Which combinations are **most important** to you? Could you also create a top 3 for these?
 - **What** do you consider **important** when you think about media?
 - **What** do you **pay attention** to when using media?
- Why is there a difference between your "most frequent" and "most important" top 3?
 - Take a final picture at the end of this sorting exercise.

Key Questions

We're now going to go a bit deeper into the cards you've sorted for yourself.

Always start from the combinations in front of you. Try to follow the accents and topics they bring up as we go.

Media content. Using the sorting exercise, I'd like to get a sense of what matters most to you when it comes to media content. We're already thinking of **topics, genres, channels, and formats**—but there might be other things that are important to you too

[GENRES]

- Which genres interest you most?
 - → For example: politics, culture, sports, gaming, ..
 - What is it about [mentioned genre] that appeals to you?
- Are there topics you're not really interested in, but still see a lot or hear a lot about in the media?
- How **important** is news to you? Why?
- Do you ever play games? How and where? Why?
 - Which games do you play?

[SOURCE]

- Are there certain brands (Netflix, Spotify, Minecraft, YouTube, Q-music, VRT NWS, ...) that you particularly value? Which ones, and why?
 - Do you follow any international brands,
- Do you follow certain people on social media—such as celebrities, journalists, gamers, influencers, or content creators? Why do you follow them?

[FORMAT]

- There are many different media formats. If we think only about audio (listening), it could be through a live radio stream, specific episodes, short clips or podcasts.
 - Try to identify the formats for each combination: long form or short form? Which medium (text, video, image, ..)?

Thinking about the different kinds of content you use: what do you think of the overall range that's available?

- When you want to find something news to watch or listen to, how do you go about it?
- **How do you usually discover** new content?
- Do you have any suggestions for making this more relevant or useful to you?

Platform.

- Earlier you mentioned brands and people you follow: on which social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram) do you follow them?
- What makes a platform attractive to you?
- Why do you use certain platforms? What are you looking for there?
- Is it more about the form (format) or about the content itself?
- What do you feel is missing from traditional media? Is it the content, or is it that they're not present on the platform you use?

Context. Let's go now into more detail for each moment you use media.

- How does such a media moment **start**? Do you actively intend to use media? Or is it more of a routine? Or something you stumble upon?
- **What** else are you doing at that moment?
- How much **attention** are you paying to the media?
- **Where** are you?
- **Who** is with you?
 - Do you **share** the media moment with them, or are they doing something else?
 - Who **initiated** the media moment?
- Can you say why you **developed** that particular media combination?

[INTENTION]

- So far we've mostly talked about deliberate choices you make when using media. But sometimes you "come across" media without looking for it. Does that happen to you? Where does that usually happen? (For example: radio in the background, TV on because of a partner, posts or messages on social media.)
- Are there moments when you turn on or open media "out of habit"—without really thinking about it?

[TIME]

- How has your media use changed over time, say in the last 5 to 10 years?
 - (Link this to events or changes in your life (e.g., new job, moving in with someone) – but let's focus on recent years, not from childhood.)

- Looking at these combinations in front of you, do you have any idea of how you developed them?
 - (Briefly return to the topic of intention here, making a distinction between deliberate and accidental exposure)

[COMPANY]

- Thinking about the people around you (at home or elsewhere), do you think they're engaged with media too?
- Do you ever talk with those people about media? (For example, at work or at home?)
 - (Here we come back to the context you described earlier.)
- Could you give an example of the kinds of things you talk about?

Media Profile

This interview study is a follow-up to a previous survey study we conducted, the Digimeter. Based on the survey responses, we created an exercise where we grouped people into **media repertoires** according to the media they use.

Based on this exercise, you were placed in the following media repertoires: [informant's repertoire name].

We describe this profile as follows: [read profile aloud]. Please note: the titles are working names.

1 Superstreamers

They watch a lot of online videos via YouTube, social media, and streaming platforms (such as Netflix). They also stream music and listen to podcasts regularly. They use various social media platforms often, including Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and BeReal. In addition, they frequently play games on consoles, computers, and smartphones. Compared to most other profiles, they follow the news far less and also listen to the radio less often.

2 Television Loyalists

They mainly use traditional ways of consuming media. They stream very little video or music. They hardly follow the news online; most of their news consumption happens via national and regional TV. The only social media platform they use is Facebook.

3 News Omnivores

They are very interested in news, which they follow via national TV, radio, news websites, and news apps on their smartphones. They listen to the radio more than any other profile. Podcasts are almost exclusively listened to via apps or websites from Flemish media brands. Half of the people in this profile watch series via streaming platforms.

4 Multimedia Masters

This profile consumes the most media of all. They watch videos, stream music, listen to podcasts, follow the news, use social media (and follow influencers), and game on smartphones and computers more than any other profile.

5 Tv- and Regional Viewers

Almost everyone in this profile watches national TV to keep up with the news. They also listen to the radio and watch regional TV much more than average. In terms of social media, they use almost exclusively Facebook.

6 Radio/Music Lovers

They listen to music even more than other profiles, often via CDs or the radio set. They do not use any form of social media. They follow the news almost exclusively via national or regional TV or the radio.

7 Offline News Enthusiasts

They enjoy following the news and always do so through traditional means, such as national or regional TV, the printed newspaper, and the radio. They use very little social media, but if they do, it is always Facebook.

- What do you recognize in this profile that also applies to you?
- Are there things you do not identify with?
 - Why or why not?

Closing

We're nearing the end of our conversation, in which we have discussed quite a lot.

As a final question, I'd like to ask: What is the most important thing I should definitely remember from this conversation? Why is that?

- Personally, what stands out to me most from our conversation is [summarise what stood out you]. Does that sound right?
- Finally, do you have any other questions, or are there any topics you would still like to discuss?

If you think of anything else later, or if you have any further questions for me, you can always contact me by ...

Thank you very much!