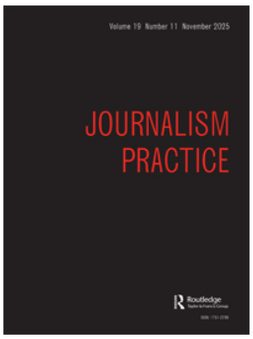

Journalism Practice

ISSN: 1751-2786 (Print) 1751-2794 (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/rjop20

News Audience Experiences with Local Visual News: A Digital Diary Study

T. J. Thomson & Rachael Anderson

To cite this article: T. J. Thomson & Rachael Anderson (21 Oct 2025): News Audience Experiences with Local Visual News: A Digital Diary Study, Journalism Practice, DOI: 10.1080/17512786.2025.2575899

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2025.2575899

© 2025 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

Published online: 21 Oct 2025.

Submit your article to this journal

Article views: 228

View related articles

View Crossmark data

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
https://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=rjop20

JOURNALISM PRACTICE
https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2025.2575899

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

OPEN ACCESS Check for updates

News Audience Experiences with Local Visual News: A Digital Diary Study

T. J. Thomson and Rachael Anderson

RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia

ABSTRACT

Focusing attention on the visual mode in news is essential given the visual nature of online news environments, the necessity of engaging audiences inundated in a flood of content, and the way that visual news can spark a unique reaction with its viewers. Given this, the present study explores the topics represented in visual news—photographs, other types of images, or videos—that non-urban audiences regard as surprising, interesting, or remarkable. It also identifies the specific aspects that explain why participants find these examples distinctive. To do this, the project uses a digital diary study method to better understand news audiences' in situ encounters with local visual news. Visuals related to four topics—crime and justice, nature/pets/animals, politics, and economics—were the most prevalent in the sample. Participants' responses around why the examples were interesting, surprising, or remarkable coalesced around five reasons: aspects of the image or video itself, aspects of the presentation context, some personal connection to the image or video, a connection one's friends, colleagues, or family have or could potentially have to the image or video, or the perceived relevance or impact of the example for the local community writ large.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 24 June 2025
Accepted 10 October 2025

KEYWORDS
Visual news; visual journalism; photojournalism; audience studies; diary study; news audience engagement; engaging news visuals

Introduction

> Pictures will trigger whether or not I bother to read the story. Sometimes, headlines can be a bit deceptive. The pictures channel you into reading the story that goes with the picture. Sometimes, it's as simple as you know somebody in the picture. But other times, the picture will give a different perspective than the headline. That's very important.

This is how one person, a 65-year-old woman living in a very remote community in Western Australia, described the role of visuals in relation to her news consumption. As this one anecdote hints at, focusing attention on the visual mode in news is essential given the visual nature of online news environments, the necessity of engaging audiences inundated in a flood of content, and the way that visual news can spark a unique reaction with its viewers (Mendelson 2001; Chouliaraki 2008). At the same time, the situation in regional, rural, or remote communities is vital to understand. It is here where news

CONTACT T. J. Thomson t.j.thomson@rmit.edu.au

© 2025 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

audiences report the highest levels of trust in news but also where news is the most under-resourced compared to news outlets in urban areas (Park et al. 2024). Listening to regional news audiences about their expectations of, experiences with, and concerns about news through interviews and surveys is important but so, too, are observational methods that allow for an understanding of news audience behaviour and their in-situ encounters with visual news.

This project uses a diary study to learn about the local news topics that participants regard as interesting, surprising, or remarkable in their communities and the specific aspects that make these examples noteworthy. It does this using the visual mode by focusing on visual examples of news photographs, other types of images, and videos that participants organically encounter and regard as distinctive. By adopting this focus, the study privileges the perspectives of those living in areas that are often marginalised, neglected, or under-represented. The study also focuses on a topic—local visual news and audience reactions to it—that is under-represented in the scholarship but that is necessary to provide a more comprehensive and nuanced picture of visual news research more broadly.

The rise of digital platforms has radically shifted how audiences consume visual news, with social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube reshaping audience preferences for news content. Local news audience expectations are similarly evolving; however, less is known about how audiences in regional, rural, or remote areas consume and engage with visual news. The review that follows examines literature on shifts in news audience consumption patterns and expectations of visual news in the digital age, and the extent to which these shifts are reflected in local journalism research.

Literature Review

Audience Consumption of Visual News

Within the broader corpus of research into audience consumption of visual news, studies have investigated various measures of audience engagement with news images, including the impact of visuals on attention and memory (Newhagen and Reeves 1992; Mendelson 2001) and emotion and action (Chouliaraki 2008). Early studies analysing television news found that negative images were most attention-grabbing and memorable to audiences (Newhagen and Reeves 1992; Newhagen 1998), and scholars of photojournalism and conflict have argued that graphic and upsetting images can mobilise citizens to political action (Chouliaraki 2008; Iyer et al. 2014; Maier, Slovic, and Mayorga 2016). Scholars have also identified that visual framing affects how audiences consume news. For example, Brantner, Lobinger, and Wetzstein (2011) found that human-interest visual framing in news coverage of the conflict in Gaza —featuring civilians and victims—elicited stronger emotional reactions and higher perceived communicative quality and objectivity compared to political visual framing, featuring officials and press conferences (Brantner, Lobinger, and Wetzstein 2011). Similarly, Dahmen, Thier, and Walth (2021) conducted a study comparing audience engagement with problem-focused new images compared to solutions-focused images. Their findings indicate that solutions-focused visual reporting is more engaging on average, suggesting a possible shift from earlier studies contending that negative imagery was most engaging for audiences.

Scholars of visual journalism have identified a shift in the past two decades, especially, in relation to the use of generic visuals in the news that have a symbolic rather than direct connection with what is shown (Gürsel 2012; Tomanić Trivundža and Vezovnik 2021). For example, Machin (2004) observed:

> What matters now is no longer only what photographs represent, when and where they were taken, and why. What matters now as much, or more, is how many different contexts they can be inserted into, both in terms of what they represent and in terms of their form, as they must be able to fit into a range of overall layout designs […] The more they are multi-purpose, generic and decorative, the better they will sell. There has been a shift … from emphasis on photography as witness to photography as a symbolic system (Machin 2004, 317).

Kennedy and colleagues (2025) have recently begun exploring how news audiences, at least British ones, experience and react to generic visuals in the news. Their findings challenge popular notions that all stock photos in news are cliched, inauthentic, and unengaging. Instead, they find that generic visuals can "function as public images, connecting and engaging audiences in public life and foregrounding the role of the personal in engagements with the social issues portrayed in the news" (2).

Literature on audience consumption of visual news has also focused on audience preferences around particular types of visuals (Thomson and Greenwood 2017; Koliska et al. 2021; Himma-Kadakas and Ferrer Conill 2022). A key area of this research focuses on online news content, which provides new ways for audiences to offer feedback through metrics such as "likes", comments, and views (Lee and Tandoc 2017), in turn influencing journalistic content (Welbers et al. 2016; Koliska et al. 2021). For instance, Thomson and Greenwood (2017) examined audience engagement with images shared by the Instagram accounts of leading news organisations in the UK and US, analysing why some photos receive more engagement and why particular types of people tend to "like" specific kinds of content. Most users preferred "feature" images including portraits, travel and adventure photos, and images that were positive, uplifting or funny. Users valued Instagram as a platform for its "boundless reach", including overseas photos and depictions of exotic locales, people, and situations (Thomson and Greenwood 2017, 215). A preference for "soft" or feature news from audiences is also reflected in research on news videos. Himma-Kadakas and Ferrer Conill (2022), for example, analysed how young people in Estonia evaluate news videos disseminated on YouTube, finding participants said they preferred "positive" stories about ordinary people, the environment, wellness, and education (p.165).

Studies on audience consumption of visual news have also identified the preferences of Generation Z for visual content on social media platforms (Gentilviso et al. 2019), with scholarship signalling a clear shift away from traditional news sources and formats by young people (Huang 2009; Clark and Marchi 2017). In a study on news consumption on social media among 18–25-year-olds in Spain, the UK, and France, Vazquez-Herrero, Negreira-Rey, and Sixto-Garcia (2022) found that YouTube was the most popular platform, used by 95.7% of participants, followed by Instagram, which was used by 93.2%. News access on these platforms is characterised by the "news finds me" phenomena, where young people assume that if news is important, they will be exposed to it within their existing social media networks (Clark and Marchi 2017; Boczkowski, Mitchelstein, and Matassi 2018; Vazquez-Herrero, Negreira-Rey, and Sixto-Garcia 2022).

Australian Context

In the Australian context, most insights into audience engagement with visual news come from broader surveys on news consumption, which examine trends based on factors such as news format (e.g., print, online, or television), as well as demographics like age, gender, and location (e.g., urban or regional audiences). A report about news access published by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) in 2024, for example, notes that online news sources continue to dominate the sector, with 79% of Australians accessing news online, compared with more traditional sources such as television (58%), audio (42%) and print newspapers (18%). Another recent study on digital news access revealed that only 17% of Australians engage with newspapers, reflecting a significant 21% decline since 2016 (Park et al. 2024). Print media consumption remains notably higher among certain demographics, with over half of Australians aged 75 and older continuing to read print news on a weekly basis (ACMA 2024).

Reflecting international trends, nearly half of Australians now use social media to access news (Newman et al. 2024; Park et al. 2024, 10). Facebook is the primary source of news on social media, with 70% of individuals using the platform for news, and nearly half (47%) indicating that it was their most trusted social media site for news (ACMA 2024). Australians aged 18–25 are the most likely age group to use social media for news, demonstrating a shift away from online news websites, with only 12% of this age group accessing online news websites as their main source of news (ACMA 2024). While reputable news outlets are the most popular social media news sources, since 2022 there has been an increase in the use of community and special interest groups to access news, along with news shared by celebrities and influencers (ACMA 2024).

Australian men continue to show a stronger interest in the news than women, but the gap is becoming even more pronounced among Generation Z. Only 23% of Gen Z women report being very interested in news, compared to nearly half of Gen Z men (47%) (Park et al. 2024, 19). This widening division suggests that young women are increasingly disengaged from mainstream news. When it comes to the types of news that capture their attention, women are more drawn to topics like mental health and wellness, lifestyle, culture, and entertainment. However, they tend to show less interest in areas such as international news, science and technology, sports, and business or economic updates, compared with men (Park et al. 2024, 42).

People living in major cities are more likely to be interested in news than those in regional areas; however, this gap has narrowed (Park et al. 2024). Australians report they are most interested in local news (64%), but only half of them say they are getting enough (Park et al. 2024). While Australians access local news in regional areas through both print newspapers and digital platforms, a 2023 study of 4,116 Australian local newspaper readers found that 71% of participants preferred to read their local paper in print (Hess, Waller, and Lai 2023). Among the participants who did engage with local news online, 67% would first visit their local newspaper's website to access news and information, followed by Facebook (13%), Google (13%), and local council websites (7%) (Hess, Waller, and Lai 2023). Significantly, more than half of younger local readers said they read a physical copy of the local newspaper, although they preferred the digital edition (Hess, Waller, and Lai 2023). This compares to 7% of 18–24-year-olds who read

newspapers from a national sample of both regional and urban audiences (ACMA 2024), revealing that local news consumers have unique preferences for news access.

Audience Expectations of Local, Visual News

Local and regional news serves distinct purposes compared to metropolitan news (Hess and Waller 2017), such as advocating for local communities and providing a platform for these communities to voice their opinions (Hanusch 2015). The degree to which these roles are reflected in visual news at the local level remains underexplored in journalism research (Caple 2019; Gulyas & Hess, 2024). While research has explored how all-rounder journalists in regional Australia evaluate visual, local news (Thomson 2024), little exists from the perspective of audiences. A notable exception is Thomson and Anderson's (2025) study that found local news audiences were critical of news photos that lacked information or storytelling value and "told" rather than "showed."

Literature on broader audience expectations of journalism can offer valuable insights into the specific expectations that local audiences may have from the news. Scholars have identified that these expectations primarily align with normative functions of the press (van der Wurff and Schoenbach 2014; Karlsson and Clerwall 2018). For example, van der Wurff and Schoenbach (2014) analysed audience expectations of Dutch news media, identifying that news consumers had both "civic" and "citizen" demands of journalists. Civic demands reflected the normative professional role of journalists, highlighting their responsibilities to inform, interpret and critique (van der Wurff and Schoenbach 2014). Citizen demands, however, emphasised a desire for responsive journalism, attractive news content, and audience participation in the news process, which align with more market-oriented functions of news media such as entertainment. It is important to note, as Heiselberg and Hopmann (2024) identify, audience expectations are shaped by both socially accepted norms and standards, as well as individual preferences, which may sometimes contradict these broader expectations (2456).

Local News Audience Expectations

Research into audience expectations of local news has emphasised both the social and symbolic roles of local journalism, as well as the specific needs of local audiences in varying contexts. Nielsen (2015) highlights that people view staying informed about local affairs as crucial, with local newspapers seen as vital for maintaining societal cohesion. This reflects the broader expectation that local journalism should both inform the public and act as a social glue, helping to unite communities (Nielsen, 2016; Hess and Waller 2017).

Further research has illuminated more nuanced expectations based on specific community needs (Napoli et al. 2016; Weber and Mathews 2022; Mellor and Nguyen 2023; Heiselberg and Hopmann 2024). In a study by Mellor and Nguyen (2023), for instance, local news audiences in the UK were particularly critical of content that appeared overly reliant on official sources, highlighting a widespread expectation for more independent, investigative journalism. In addition to concerns about objectivity and independence, local journalism is increasingly seen by news audiences as distant and too commercialised due to cost-cutting measures, mergers, and closures (Heiselberg and Hopmann 2024). This has led to a weakening of the community function that local news is expected to serve, with

many people turning to alternative sources for information on local issues, such as social media or direct access to local government or community organisations (Park, Fisher, and Lee 2020). A study from the US found that local news consumers expressed a strong sense of individual responsibility or "burden" to stay informed, mentioning a lack of coordination among "disjointed" and "sporadic" local news sources, making it challenging to stay updated on local issues and events (McCollough, Crowell, and Napoli 2017).

Studies on Australian local news audiences highlight the essential role of community cohesion, with Hess, Waller, and Lai (2023) finding that 60% of regional news readers consider the primary function of local news to be acting as a community hub. Similarly, Park, Fisher, and Lee (2022) found that a news consumer's motivation to support local news is mainly driven by community-related factors, such as a sense of belonging and the ability to share news, while the editorial content itself is of lesser importance. When individuals perceive news as a social asset, they prioritise its role in the community over the immediate value of the content. At the same time, local news audiences in Australia have expressed a desire for more investigative journalism and information about events (Hess, Waller, and Lai 2023, 2606). They also view the roles of holding powerful individuals and organisations accountable, as well as acting as a local advocate, as important for local news, following its role in fostering community cohesion (Park, Fisher, and Lee 2022).

Research into the expectations of local news audiences reveals a strong demand for journalism that not only informs but also strengthens community ties. However, issues such as commercialisation, a lack of investigative journalism, and a reliance on official sources have led to growing dissatisfaction and a shift towards alternative sources, such as social media community groups. In the context of Australian local news, there is a clear emphasis on community engagement, with audiences prioritising the social functions of news over its editorial content. Given that a gap exists in literature on news audience experiences with local, visual journalism, this study seeks to address this gap by posing the following research question:

RQ1A: Which topics that are represented in the local visual news examples do audiences living in regional, rural, or remote areas regard as interesting, surprising, or remarkable?

RQ1B: What is it about the examples that makes them interesting, surprising, or remarkable to news audiences?

Methods

In order to better understand regional, rural, or remote news audiences' experiences with local visual news, we designed a digital diary study that ran over the course of 14 months. Diary studies allow participants to provide "frequent reports on the events and experiences of their daily lives" (Bolger, Davis, and Rafaeli 2003, 579). One of their chief strengths is the concreteness of their data, which reflects the unique experiences of those who compile them, coupled with the short turnaround between the experience and the account of the experience, which reduces risk for memory errors and other recollection biases (Bolger, Davis, and Rafaeli 2003). This concreteness is also known as ecological validity (Fox, Gilbert, and Tang 2018), as it tries to reflect the participants' natural environments and conditions (in this case, the circumstances during which they normally encounter local visual news in an organic fashion).

One of the key considerations in the design of a diary study is determining the reporting interval. Three options exist (Wheeler and Reis 1991). These include: interval-, signal-, and event-contingent protocols. The first of these—interval-dependent—requires participants to report on their experiences at regular, predetermined intervals, such as each night before bed. The second, signal-contingent, relies on a prompt, such as a text message or email, that is sent to participants at either fixed, random or a combination of fixed and random intervals. Event-contingent protocols are arguably the most involved and require the participants to report each time the relevant event occurs. This design is appropriate for "rare or specialized occurrences that would not necessarily be captured by fixed or random interval assessments" (Wheeler and Reis 1991, 588).

Given the nature of our research questions, the divergence in how often participants accessed local news, and the impossible-to-predict nature of when they would encounter examples that met the study's criteria, we chose a reporting approach that was event-contingent and supported this with a weekly reminder email or text message that participants could opt in to. Specifically, we asked participants to photograph or screenshot instances of local visual news (photographs, illustrations, other images, or videos) that they organically encountered and that they regarded as "remarkable" in some fashion. We noted to participants that the examples they choose to submit could be positive, neutral, negative, or ones that they had mixed feelings about and invited participants to select examples they found interesting, troubling, or that they wanted to discuss further. In doing this, we endeavoured to provide a clear definition of the triggering event so that participants reported only relevant events and did not under- or over-report events due to an ambiguous definition. We used the "remarkable" event trigger for the first eight months of the study but broadened this slightly to also include examples of "interesting" or "surprising" local visual news for participants who joined during the final six months of the study. We did so as we found that "remarkable" was potentially a high bar for some participants and they sometimes reported struggling to find the required number of entries. In the words of one of the participants:

> The most striking part of the exercise so far is how completely bored stiff I am by the images in the local papers I read. Honestly, if I didn't spy familiar faces every now and then, I would have no reason to look at the images at all!

We asked participants to complete seven diary entries, no more than one per day, each time they encountered local visual news they regarded as interesting, surprising, or remarkable in some way. Due to participant attrition or to ineligible entries (ones that didn't include a visual or that included advertising rather than editorial content, for example), not every participant submitted seven entries. Some participants also submitted more than seven entries. Participants were invited to wait as long as was necessary to organically encounter seven relevant examples rather than to search out interesting, surprising, or remarkable local visual news examples. In all, 37 community members contributed 257 diary entries (for an average of 6.94 submissions per participant). Participation lasted about three weeks (22.75 days), on average, from the time between participants' first and final submissions.

Participant Recruitment and Demographics

We recruited participants who were 18 years or older, who lived in regional, rural, or remote parts of Australia at the time of the study, and who reported consuming news.

Thus, we used a purposeful or purposive sampling approach (Wang 1999) to hear from audiences who aren't usually the focus of research or policy concern. Potential participants learned about the study through a number of ways: by being referred to the study by local journalists, by seeing posters in their local community, by seeing an ad in their local newspaper or online news outlet, by seeing an online social media campaign promoting the study, or by being recruited through a market research company.

By using a diverse set of recruitment approaches, we expanded the opportunity to participate and obtained a potentially more diverse cross-section of participants. For example, using a purely digital approach might have excluded those who aren't active online or just running ads in the (print or online) versions of a newspaper might not reach those who don't often consume news or do so through those channels. Inviting journalists—as the eventual recipients of the feedback—to suggest potential participants also provided greater agency for this stakeholder group and reduced the power imbalance between the researchers and the local journalists. The literature acknowledges that it can be difficult for outsiders to recruit relevant participants and endorses partnering with local organisations (news outlets, in this case) or drawing on client databases (in the case of the market research company) to try to recruit participants with particular attributes (Hergenrather et al. 2009).

Rather than try to recruit participants from only a single community and identify issues relevant to that community alone, this study instead recruits participants from multiple communities across all Australian states and territories to explore the more and less consistent themes across them. In doing so, we hope to provide feedback and guidance that is more widely applicable to industry practitioners in regional newsrooms writ large rather than to just a single newsroom or community.

The 37 participants (a higher-than-average number for qualitative research [Subedi 2021]) ranged in age from 23 to 67 (the average age was 38.54) and included 24 women and 13 men. About 80 percent of the sample reported an Australian or European ethnic heritage while the remaining 20 percent reported an Asian or Aboriginal ethnic background. Eighty-three percent of the sample reported being born in Australia while the remaining 17 percent reported being born overseas.

Participants reported having lived in their current communities from as few as six months to as long as 47.25 years (the average duration was 11.55 years). Fifty-four percent of the sample—including one participant who said they had access to news subscriptions through their work—reported not paying for news while the remaining 46 percent reported either having a paid subscription to a news outlet (or news aggregator) or buying a print copy of the paper at least once a week. About three-quarters of the sample reported engaging with the news consistently (consuming it each day or week when it is published) while the remaining quarter reported engaging with the news only sporadically.

Data Analysis

Participants submissions were first checked for relevance and to ensure they met the study's criteria. Following this, participants' submissions were coded according to Paulussen and D'heer's (2013) 14-point typology of hyperlocal news categories. These included crime and justice; local club life; culture, sports and health, education, fire and traffic

accidents, construction works, charity, human interest, lost and found, nature/pets/animals, politics, economics, and miscellaneous. Subsequently, the submissions were inductively examined to identify the reasons why participants regarded each as interesting, surprising, or remarkable. These reasons were later amalgamated into broader themes (Scharp and Sanders 2018).

Findings

Topical Overview

The first part of the study's first research question focused on the topics represented in the local visual news examples participants shared and regarded as interesting, surprising, or remarkable. The 257 examples participants shared spanned 13 topics. A visual overview of their distribution can be seen in Table 1. Four of these topics—crime and justice, nature/pets/animals, politics, and economics—represented 10 percent or more of the sample and are deemed major topics. The remaining nine represented fewer than 10 percent of the examples and are deemed minor topics. Examples of coverage from the major topics will be given but not for the minor topics, given word count limits.

Major Topics

The crime and justice category includes depictions of locals airing their views about crime, crime captured on security cameras, photos of the victims or perpetrators of crime, coverage of arson and illegal drug-related activity, coverage about police, and ongoing or concluded criminal proceedings in court, including photos of judges and courthouses.

The nature/pets/animals category focused mainly on weather events—including natural disasters like cyclones and droughts through to more routine coverage of weather, including extreme temperatures and rainfall. Smaller amounts of coverage focused on beaches, beached whales, algal blooms, and fishing or animal disease. Outlier coverage in this category included an airline trialling in-cabin pet travel, a wildlife sanctuary, and coverage of environmental pollution and beautification.

The politics category included mainly coverage of city council-related news or regional or national political news that was interesting, surprising, or remarkable for the local

Table 1. Interesting, surprising, or remarkable local visual news topics.

Topic	Frequency	Percentage
Crime and justice	47	18.3%
Nature/pets/animals	42	16.3%
Politics	34	13.2%
Economics	27	10.5%
Sports and health	22	8.56%
Culture	18	7%
Human interest	17	6.61%
Fire and traffic accidents	14	5.45%
Construction works	11	4.28%
Charity	8	3.11%
Education	6	2.33%
Miscellaneous	6	2.33%
Local club life	5	1.95%

community in some way. It also included coverage of government spending and behaviours (such as mobile scooter usage) that community members thought weren't regulated or weren't regulated well.

The economics category included coverage about the price of goods and exports, local chamber of commerce meetings or events, news about housing and development, transportation, energy, and alcohol prices, scams, tech being used to improve business operations, and the opening of new businesses.

What Makes Local Visual News Interesting, Surprising, or Remarkable

The second part of the study's first research question explored the specific aspects that participants said made their examples interesting, surprising, or remarkable. Participant answers coalesced around one of five areas: aspects of the image or video itself, aspects of the presentation context, some personal connection to the image or video, a connection one's friends, colleagues, or family have or could potentially have to the image or video, or the perceived relevance or impact of the example for the local community writ large. An at-a-glance overview of the distribution of these findings can be found in Table 2.

Personal Connection

The most prevalent of these five areas (with 36.6 percent of the responses) was the individual connection the viewer had with the image or video. This often included individuals or locations that were recognisable to the participant and that positively impacted their engagement, such as encountering in the news a photo of an "easily identifiable building that local people recognise as 'home'" or seeing a recognisable face and learning something new about what is happening in their life. In the words of a 23-year-old man living in the Northern Territory: "I have met this man in a grocery store but did not know who he was, highlighting just how small the region is and how there are so many amazing people providing for [place name's] community members." Participants also reflected on how seeing someone or something represented sometimes "brought back memories" from when they themselves spent time in that location or interacted with the individual shown.

Participants frequently identified in their responses with the areas being shown by saying, "I am part of [town name]" or by making more generic references to familiar buildings, businesses, or locations. Participants also thought that news that happened especially close to them was more engaging. In the words of a 34-year-old man living in South Australia: "This courtroom is only 3–5 min walk from where I live and a local man is getting tried for murder" while another participant, a 45-year-old man living in

Table 2. Aspects that make local news visuals interesting, surprising, or remarkable.

Focus	Frequency	Percentage
Aspects of the image or video itself	18	7%
Aspects of the presentation context	69	26.8%
Personal connection to the image or video	94	36.6%
Connection one's colleagues, friends, or family have or could have to the image or video	8	3.11%
Relevance or impact of the image or video to the community	68	26.5%

Queensland, said, "I was pretty relieved to know that the police had found these crooks. I had been told of a group going around stealing from properties near me. Turns out they are just around the corner from where we live."

Participants were also attracted to stories that piqued their personal interest, such as history, women's safety, sports, or antique cars, or that were relevant to their circumstances, such as being a home-owner, or that were related to their work ("This was interesting to me as it directly related to my personal experience. I work with a homelessness service. So for me, this was interesting as it is something I'm directly involved in and concerned about.")

Participants also found images and videos engaging that could make sense of the present (such as in this example: "I witnessed the helicopter myself whilst driving into [town name] and was wondering what was going on") or could potentially impact their future, either in the short- or long-term. As an example of the former, one participant was engaged by a photo of an airplane alongside a story about cheaper flight prices as they were planning a trip in the coming weeks and were pleased to see they might be able to benefit from the cheaper travel prices. In another example, a newly arrived man to a community shared a photo of an end-of-year community event and reflected, "These are the articles that I look for as a new member of this area. We are always looking for great social ways to join the community." As an example of the latter, one participant in her 30s from Victoria was struck by what she called a "simple image" that showed three women a few decades older than she was and provided a potential blueprint for her future. In her words: "This is a simple image, but it feels remarkable to me to see these older women experiencing connection, friendship, community participation, and happiness. This image is aspirational to me."

Presentation Context

The second most prevalent area (with 26.8 percent of the responses) was participants perceiving the presentation context as interesting, surprising, or remarkable. Here, it was less about who or what was represented and more about *how* the news outlet chose to represent them and to tell a story. This included commentary on the ways that the news was reported generally by some outlets ("[This is] an unusual example of the local newspaper reporting actual conflict") or in relation to particular topics (such as focusing on the effects of natural disasters but not on their antecedents, in the case of climate change). It also included symbolic or generic representations rather than ones from the local area (such as in the case of what one participant called a "slow news week" during which the news outlet's staff lifted a photo "straight from Shutterstock [to illustrate a story about flu season] that takes a full front page") or ones that weren't recognisable to locals ("It was surprising to me that they used an image which is not very recognisable … Even as a local, I have no idea where it is. It makes me not even think to click on it.").

It also included normative reflections, such as who should be able to speak about an issue or represent the community, or why something (such as a local councillor resigning her term earlier due to a "surprise pregnancy") qualified as news. In the words of a 49-year-old woman living in Western Australia woman: "It depicts a small contingent of vocal locals blaming certain groups for crime in town when they have been inflammatory in their views for years. It's remarkable as the person depicted in this picture is speaking

for a whole community and bringing the town into disrepute." Participants' critiques were sometimes quite deep and philosophical, including how gender should be represented in local news. In the words of a 39-year-old woman living in Victoria:

> I have mixed feeling about this image. The headline 'Call For Respect' tells me they're talking about men's violence against women - a hot topic at the moment (and rightly so). Do I believe local, regional newspapers should be publicising local women's anti-violence initiatives? Yes, of course. Does this image feel like it has anything to do with me (a 39-year-old local woman)? No, I do not. I am disappointed to see an image of women dressed in pink as a representation of some kind of power/activism/solidarity? It feels so reductive - haven't we moved away from such ridiculous, essentialist views of what it means to be a woman? Yes, girls' clothes at the local Kmart are mostly pink … but aren't we criticising the gross socialisation that is happening with these archaic ideas, aren't we trying to redefine what it means to be feminine (and masculine) - and, importantly, aren't all these bullshit stereotypes part of the problem of gendered violence in the first place? Come on women of [town name], do better. Good job to [news outlet name] for publicising the event - but I wonder if they have done any deeper work of investigating the issue at hand. Or, is this image (and the event itself perhaps) just an example of moral licensing hidden behind a veil of pink balloons and bullshit?

Participants praised instances where the local news outlet provided surprising juxtapositions, such as showing art made by prisoners, and non-stereotypical representations (such as an "intimate" moment of an athlete looking after another injured athlete that showed a different moment "from what you would typically see on a football field"). They also noticed when under-represented topics (such as indoor bowls being covered compared to more "mainstream sports" like football and netball) were covered or when the image or video didn't match the mood or tenor of the story (such as when a photo of a smiling judge accompanied a story about youth crime).

Relevance or Impact for the Community

The third most prevalent area (with 26.5 percent of responses) was images or videos that participants thought were relevant or impactful for the local community. This included coverage of the price of primary industry materials (that "have a huge impact on employment and community morale in the region") and safety issues that have the potential to affect multiple people throughout the community. It also included coverage of more universal topics, such as mental health and healthcare, more broadly, transportation, energy, housing, and a perceived lack of community services.

Participants in this category praised coverage that showed community self-organising to advocate for positive change, highlighted local community wide resilience, or reported on community wide issues that they thought needed attention. In the words of one participant in their 20s who lived in the Northern Territory:

> I find this image interesting given the NT's unique rules and regulations regarding the sale and distribution of liquor to its communities. I believe rules put in place to limit and control the sale of alcohol should be properly managed and strict since it has played a massive role in the deterioration of the NT's various rural population groups' health and social circles. And a sales cap is an important measure that should remain to put public health before store profits.

Participants also reflected here on coverage of events (such as cyclones) and issues (such as a perceived lack of specialist medical staff) that had a larger, more macro scale that

sometimes affected entire regions or states/territories rather than just their local community. In the words of a participant who lived in a remote community in Australia:

> Its not uncommon to hear of people in the Northern Territory flying interstate to visit specialists given the shortage in specialist medical staff that reside in the NT. And its surprising to me given that I have heard the Territory is trying to offer more competitive salaries, better work benefits, and relocation support, that there is still a need for patients to leave the territory for certain procedures.

Aspects of the Photo or Video Itself

The fourth most prevalent area (with 7 percent of the responses) concerned the ways that the photo or video had been created. This included the presence and timing of the camera operator in capturing a unique shot, showing "spectacular" content (in the case of fisherman next to a breaching great white shark), the "exciting" or "interesting" use of camera angles to provide a more unique view ("this angle of the most talked about building in town at the moment gives a different perspective to the one we usually see from street level"), the size or scale shown (in the case of "huge" earthworms pictured next to someone's hand or the "size of the fallen electricity pylon next to the truck"), interesting light, eye-catching colours, or the thoughtful use of camera settings, including shutter speed, to show action (such as water droplets frozen in the air during a football match) that happens too quickly for the human eye to meaningfully appreciate. In the words of a 27-year-old man living in Victoria:

> I think it [this photo] showed the wet weather quite well. There was a couple of other photos that piqued my interest with players head-to-toe in mud but this one stood out. Seeing the water splash up is quite a look.

Participants also praised an infographic for its ability to efficiently and clearly convey information and a photo collage (showing before and after) that allowed for more information to be conveyed than would otherwise be possible in a single photo. Participants also commented on images that were remarkable for their graphic content. In the words of a 46-year-old man living in Victoria:

> This photo is remarkable for how plainly it depicts violence. Increasingly violence is abstracted in mainstream media outlets (social media is a different beast). It's unusual to see such a stark portrayal of what happens when someone is physically attacked.

Connection or Relevance to the Viewer's Friends, Colleagues, or Family Members

The fifth and final area (with 3.11 percent of the responses) was the potential connection or relevance that an image or video had to a friend, colleague, or family member. This included a story about childcare that wasn't directly relevant to a 67-year-old community member, an Anglican priest, who nonetheless shared a photo about this topic and noted, "This interests me because I have parishioners who use childcare, and who work in childcare. It is so hard for women to get into / stay in the workforce because of the lack of childcare places." This person's connections and the potential impact the story had on them made the story relevant for the viewer. This category also included stories that were

relevant for participants' partners, work subordinates, family and friends. Sometimes this news allowed the community members to stay in touch with others who were affected (such as in the case of 37-year-old man living in Queensland who said, "My friend is part of the SES [State Emergency Service]—I reached out to him when I heard this local news. It saddens me to know this happened to such a lovely lady") or foster topics of conversation with friends, family, or loved ones.

Discussion and Conclusion

As the study's opening anecdote reveals, audiences use news visuals to determine whether to engage with an accompanying story or to move on. This decision is sometimes influenced by recognising familiar faces in the news visuals and, at other times, by thinking a story is personally relevant or relevant for one's wider community, which underscores the role that local news can play in helping unite community members and foster social cohesion (Nielsen, 2016; Hess and Waller 2017).

This study sheds much-needed light on audience experiences with and perceptions of visual news. It does this in a particularly key area: in regional, rural, or remote communities where audiences report the highest levels of trust in news but also where news is the most under-resourced compared to news outlets in urban areas (Park et al. 2024). By adopting this focus, the study privileges the perspectives of those living areas that are often marginalised, neglected, or under-represented. Additionally, while some previous research has identified attributes—such as negativity or graphic content—that contribute to audience engagement with visual news (Newhagen and Reeves 1992; Newhagen 1998; Chouliaraki 2008; Iyer et al. 2014; Maier, Slovic, and Mayorga 2016), this study contributes to the scholarship on visual news by broadening the focus from not only examining content and its features in isolation but also considering how the personal characteristics and experiences of audience members shape engagement, also. This is revealed in how participants responded to some news visuals based on a personal connection or on a connection the visual had with a friend, colleague, or family member, and underscores how engaging with the news is both an individual and social process that incorporates relationality and connections between individuals as well as between individuals and social groups that are part of the wider community. In doing so, this research underscores the need to move beyond research that only considers framing aspects within an image's borders and, instead, calls for understandings of visual news that are situated, social, and relational.

Existing ways of understanding and researching audience engagements with visual news, such as the "likes," "reshares," or other metrics that social media platforms and researchers use to evaluate engagement (Thomson and Greenwood 2017; Koliska et al. 2021; Lee and Tandoc 2017), can sometimes miss these social and behind-the-scenes dynamics that aren't captured through platform-level data. This research also reveals the ambivalent responses audiences have to local visual news that aren't neatly or sometimes even at all captured by simple "reactions" available on social media. An example of this comes from the woman who praised her local news outlet for running a story about violence against women but, at the same time, critiqued how the story was told. Evaluating or researching engagement with visual news just through simple social media metrics doesn't allow for this nuance to be appreciated. In turn, understanding the appeal of news

visuals just through metrics also provides an incomplete scholarly sense of what "quality" visual news is for different communities and areas (Thomson 2024).

In reflecting on this study's findings, it is perhaps encouraging that the primary critique news audiences in this study had of their local news providers was that the volume of local news was insufficient or that important stories were missed rather than that audiences were altogether turned off by news because of perceptions that the content was irrelevant, biased, or inaccurate. By topic, audiences found topics that had broader community wide appeal, such as reporting on crime and safety, the weather, and politics and economics, more interesting or remarkable than topics that were more niche, such as charity, education, or local club life. Resource-poor news outlets might then consider which standing sections or categories it includes in print or online and whether these align with audience demand.

In line with previous research (Newhagen and Reeves 1992; Newhagen 1998; Thomson and Anderson 2025), this study supports that news audiences, seemingly in both urban and non-urban settings, find visual news depicting negative situations, such as crime and natural disasters, as highly engaging, though this can depend on the viewing context (as some platforms are known for more serious or more lighthearted content, for example). Worthy of note, too, is the disconnect that often exists between what news audiences say they want when surveyed or interviewed (eg, that the news is too negative or that they want more positive news) and what their behaviour reveals when this aspect is studied implicitly (Trussler and Soroka 2014).

Regarding visual news, this study reveals how little the formal, aesthetic, and technical attributes of an image or video seemingly matter for news audiences, at least within the domain of local news (Thomson and Anderson 2025). This diverges from past audience-focused research conducted with urban audiences, who said they expected journalists to publish "attractive" content (van der Wurff and Schoenbach 2014). In this study, however, only seven percent of the responses concerned content that participants deemed was spectacular or that used unique angles, camera settings, or other technical or aesthetic affordances to capitalise on viewers' engagement. Much more common—and arguably important to viewers—was the personal connection they have to who or what is represented and the relevance or effect it has for the community, compared to what it looks like and to the artistic or technical merits of the image or video and the person who captured it. This revelation is encapsulated by the following reflection that one participant shared:

> I've included this image as it captures my experience of images in my local paper. At a technical and emotive level they are all terrible. In a month I haven't yet seen a photo I want to include. But the sole thing that makes an image in our local paper engaging is if I know the person / people in it. And my entire interaction with photos in my local paper occurs on this basis - I'm scanning to see who I recognise.

On one hand, this might be welcome news to local news outlets who often lack dedicated visual journalists and who instead rely on community contributed visuals or "all-rounder" staff who report and take photos or make videos in addition to their other duties. Knowing that audiences seem to place higher regard on the personal or community connection in a photo or video than on its technical or aesthetic quality can be reassuring to local newsroom staff who lack training in visual journalism or who aren't resourced to

invest in it. On the other hand, news outlets must be careful to avoid the assumption that "any visual will do." Participants' submissions and reflections strongly supported the notion that local content (as contrasted with generic content found in stock photography, for example) matters and emerging research likewise finds that uniqueness matters and that audiences are more engaged by visuals they haven't already seen, for example, on Facebook or elsewhere on social media (Thomson and Anderson 2025). This means that news outlets shouldn't crowdsource all of their visuals, as arguably many of these might have already been shared publicly on social media or elsewhere online and are not as unique as the vision that journalists could capture.

Overall, this study has value beyond the Australian context where the data were gathered. As an example, the Australian participants in this sample shared some of the "citizen" demands of journalists, such as for relevant and responsive news content, that were identified by Dutch audiences (van der Wurff and Schoenbach 2014), even if the demand for "attractive" news content wasn't as prevalent in this sample. Likewise, some of the Australian participants in this study shared concerns with the Danish participants in Heiselberg and Hopmann's (2024) research that local journalism was, at times, too distant and too commercialised due to cost-cutting measures, mergers, and closures. This is revealed in participant anecdotes such as the ones about engagement being negatively affected by the use of stock photos and publishing images where the location shown isn't recognisable to (at least some) members of the community. This suggests that generic news visuals in urban and non-urban contexts can be perceived differently (Kennedy et al. 2025). As such, paying attention to these similarities and differences across geographies and urban and non-urban contexts is necessary for achieving a more comprehensive scholarly understanding of visual news and audience engagement.

Author contributions

CRediT: **Rachael Anderson:** Writing – original draft.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This work was supported by Australian Research Council: [grant number DE230101233].

References

Australian Communications and Media Authority. 2024. *How We access news Executive summary and key findings*. https://www.acma.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-02/How%20we%20access%20news%20-%20Executive%20summary%20and%20key%20findings.pdf.

Boczkowski, P. J., E. Mitchelstein, and M. Matassi. 2018. "News Comes across When I'm in a Moment of Leisure": Understanding the Practices of Incidental News Consumption on Social Media." *New Media & Society* 20 (10): 3523–3539. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444817750396.

Bolger, N., A. Davis, and E. Rafaeli. 2003. "Diary Methods: Capturing Life as It Is Lived." *Annual Review of Psychology* 54 (1): 579–616.

Brantner, C., K. Lobinger, and I. Wetzstein. 2011. "Effects of Visual Framing on Emotional Responses and Evaluations of News Stories about the Gaza Conflict 2009." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 88 (3): 523–540. https://doi.org/10.1177/107769901108800304.

Caple, H. 2019. *Photojournalism Disrupted : The View from Australia*. New York: Routledge.

Chouliaraki, L. 2008. "The Mediation of Suffering and the Vision of a Cosmopolitan Public." *Television & New Media* 9 (5): 371–391. https://doi.org/10.1177/1527476408315496.

Clark, L. S., and R. Marchi. 2017. "Hope and Disillusionment with Legacy News." In *Young People and the Future of News: Social Media and the Rise of Connective Journalism*, edited by Lynn Schofield Clark and Regina Marchi, 55–78. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dahmen, N. S., K. Thier, and B. Walth. 2021. "Creating Engagement with Solutions Visuals: Testing the Effects of Problem-Oriented versus Solution-Oriented Photojournalism." *Visual Communication* 20 (2): 271–288. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470357219838601.

Fox, J., M. Gilbert, and W. Y. Tang. 2018. "Player Experiences in a Massively Multiplayer Online Game: A Diary Study of Performance, Motivation, and Social Interaction." *New Media & Society* 20 (11): 4056–4073.

Gentilviso, C., D. Aikat, J. Baldwin, A. Khilnani, L. Robinson, J. Davis, G. Ignatow, H. Pait, J. Schulz, and A. A. Williams. 2019. "Embracing the Visual, Verbal, and Viral Media: How Post-Millennial Consumption Habits Are Reshaping the News." In *Mediated Millennials*, edited by Jeremy Schulz, Laura Robinson, Aneka Khilnani, John Baldwin, Heloisa Pait, Apryl A. Williams, Jenny Davis, and Gabe Ignatow, 147–171. Leeds: Emerald Publishing Limited. https://doi.org/10.1108/S2050-206020190000019009.

Gulyas, A., and K. Hess. 2024. "The three "Cs" of digital local journalism: community, commitment and continuity." *Digital Journalism* 12 (1): 6–12.

Gürsel, Z. D. 2012. "The Politics of Wire Service Photography: Infrastructures of Representation in a Digital Newsroom." *American Ethnologist* 39 (1): 71–89.

Hanusch, F. 2015. "A Different Breed Altogether?: Distinctions between Local and Metropolitan Journalism Cultures." *Journalism Studies* 16 (6): 816–833. https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2014.950880.

Heiselberg, L., and D. N. Hopmann. 2024. "Local Journalism and Its Audience." *Journalism* 25 (12): 2543–2563. https://doi.org/10.1177/14648849231173226.

Hergenrather, K. C., S. D. Rhodes, C. A. Cowan, G. Bardhoshi, and S. Pula. 2009. "Photovoice as Community-Based Participatory Research: A Qualitative Review." *American Journal of Health Behavior* 33 (6): 686–698.

Hess, K., and L. Waller. 2017. *Local Journalism in a Digital World*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hess, K., L. Waller, and J. Lai. 2023. "Examining Audience Perspectives on Local Newspaper Futures." *Journalism* 24 (12): 2593–2611. https://doi.org/10.1177/14648849221134008.

Himma-Kadakas, M., and R. Ferrer Conill. 2022. "Is News Engagement Worthwhile?: Studying Young Audiences' Engagement with YouTuber-like News Content." *Nordicom Review* 43 (2): 152–170. https://doi.org/10.2478/nor-2022-0010.

Huang, E. 2009. "The Causes of Youths' Low News Consumption and Strategies for Making Youths Happy News Consumers." *Convergence* 15 (1): 105–122. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856508097021.

Iyer, A., J. Webster, M. J. Hornsey, and E. J. Vanman. 2014. "Understanding the Power of the Picture: The Effect of Image Content on Emotional and Political Responses to Terrorism." *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 44 (7): 511–521. https://doi.org/10.1111/jasp.12243.

Karlsson, M., and C. Clerwall. 2018. "Cornerstones in Journalism: According to Citizens." *Journalism Studies* 20 (8): 1184–1199. https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2018.1499436.

Kennedy, H., G. Aiello, T. Annabell, and C. W. Anderson. 2025. "Generic Visuals in the News as Public Images: Activating Emotions, Experiences and Identities." *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 0 (0), https://doi.org/10.1177/13675494241310675.

Koliska, M., N. Thurman, S. Stares, and J. Kunert. 2021. "Exploring Audience Perceptions of, and Preferences for, Online News Videos." *Journalism Studies* 22 (9): 1161–1180. https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2021.1927154.

Lee, E., and E. C. Tandoc. 2017. "When News Meets the Audience: How Audience Feedback Online Affects News Production and Consumption." *Human Communication Research* 43 (4): 436–449. https://doi.org/10.1111/hcre.12123.

Machin, D. 2004. "Building the World's Visual Language: The Increasing Global Importance of Image Banks in Corporate Media." *Visual Communication* 3 (3): 316–336. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470357204045785.

Maier, S. R., P. Slovic, and M. Mayorga. 2016. "Reader Reaction to News of Mass Suffering: Assessing the Influence of Story Form and Emotional Response." *Journalism* 18 (8): 1011–1029. https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884916663597.

McCollough, K., J. K. Crowell, and P. M. Napoli. 2017. "Portrait of the Online Local News Audience." *Digital Journalism* 5 (1): 100–118. https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2016.1152160.

Mellor, N., and A. Nguyen. 2023. "Engaging Audiences with Local News: Can Solutions Journalism Be a Solution to Local Media Crisis?" *International Journal of Communication* 17:6466–6484.

Mendelson, A. 2001. "Effects of Novelty in News Photographs on Attention and Memory." *Media Psychology* 3 (2): 119–157. https://doi.org/10.1207/S1532785XMEP0302_02.

Napoli, P. M., S. Stonbely, K. McCollough, and B. Renninger. 2016. "Local Journalism and the Information Needs of Local Communities: Toward a Scalable Assessment Approach." *Journalism Practice* 11 (4): 373–395. https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2016.1146625.

Newhagen, J. E. 1998. "TV News Images That Induce Anger, Fear, and Disgust: Effects on Approach-Avoidance and Memory." *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 42 (2): 265–276. https://doi.org/10.1080/08838159809364448.

Newhagen, J. E., and B. Reeves. 1992. "The Evening's Bad News: Effects of Compelling Negative Television News Images on Memory." *Journal of Communication* 42 (2): 25–41. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1992.tb00776.x.

Newman, N., R. Fletcher, C. T. Robertson, A. Ross Arguedas, and R. K. Nielsen. 2024. "Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2024." *Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism*.

Nielsen, R K. 2015. Local journalism : the decline of newspapers and the rise of digital media. 1st ed. I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd. in association with the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, University of Oxford.

Park, S., C. Fisher, and J. Y. Lee. 2020. *Local News Consumers*. Canberra: News Media Research Centre, University of Canberra.

Park, S., C. Fisher, and J. Y. Lee. 2022. "Regional News Audiences' Value Perception of Local News." *Journalism* 23 (8): 1663–1681. https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884921992998.

Park, S., C. Fisher, K. McGuinness, J. Lee, K. McCallum, X. Cai, M. Chatskin, L. Mardjianto, and P. Yao. 2024. *Digital News Report: Australia 2024*. Canberra: News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra.

Paulussen, S., and E. D'heer. 2013. "Using Citizens for Community Journalism: Findings from a Hyperlocal Media Project." *Journalism Practice* 7 (5): 588–603.

Scharp, K. M., and M. L. Sanders. 2018. "What Is a Theme? Teaching Thematic Analysis in Qualitative Communication Research Methods." *Communication Teacher* 33 (2): 117–121. https://doi.org/10.1080/17404622.2018.1536794.

Subedi, K. R. 2021. "Determine the Sample in Qualitative Research." *Scholars' Journal*, https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED618228.

Thomson, T. 2024. "Picturing a Quality Local News Visual: Perspectives from non-specialist Journalists." *Journalism*, https://doi.org/10.1177/14648849241253136.

Thomson, T. J., and R. Anderson. 2025. "Audience Perceptions of Engaging News Photos: A Picture-Sorting and Interview Study." *Journalism Practice*.

Thomson, T. J., and K. Greenwood. 2017. "I "Like" That: Exploring the Characteristics That Promote Social Media Engagement with News Photographs." *Visual Communication Quarterly* 24 (4): 203–218. https://doi.org/10.1080/15551393.2017.1388701.

Tomanić Trivundža, I., and A. Vezovnik. 2021. "Symbolic Photographs" as Floating and Empty Signifiers." *Journal of Language and Politics* 20 (1): 145–161. https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.20050.tom.

Trussler, M., and S. Soroka. 2014. "Consumer Demand for Cynical and Negative News Frames." *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 19 (3): 360–379. https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161214524832.

van der Wurff, R., and K. Schoenbach. 2014. "Civic and Citizen Demands of News Media and Journalists: What Does the Audience Expect from Good Journalism?" *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 91 (3): 433–451. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077699014538974.

Vazquez-Herrero, J., M.-C. Negreira-Rey, and J. Sixto-Garcia. 2022. "Mind the Gap! Journalism on Social Media and News Consumption among Young Audiences." *International Journal of Communication* 16:3822.

Wang, C. 1999. "Photovoice: A Participatory Action Research Strategy Applied to Women's Health." *Journal of Women's Health* 8 (2): 185–192.

Weber, M. S., and N. Mathews. 2022. "Explicating Local: An Audience-Based Framing of Local Community and Local News." *Digital Journalism* 12 (1): 28–47. https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2022.2142629.

Welbers, K., W. van Atteveldt, J. Kleinnijenhuis, N. Ruigrok, and J. Schaper. 2016. "News Selection Criteria in the Digital age: Professional Norms versus Online Audience Metrics." *Journalism* 17 (8): 1037–1053. https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884915595474.

Wheeler, L., and H. T. Reis. 1991. "Self-Recording of Everyday Life Events: Origins, Types, and Uses." *Journal of Personality* 59 (3): 339–354.