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**#UseTheNews study: Young people often feel that journalistic news lacks a connection to the reality of their own lives**



Hamburg (ots) -

A nationwide study by the #UseTheNews project reveals a deep information gap among the younger generation: Half of young people do not consider it important to be informed about news and current events. At the same time, they are significantly less informed than their peers who regularly use journalistic news sources. However, journalistic offerings are still only one of many sources of information used. These are the findings of the #UseTheNews study "News Usage and News Literacy in the Digital Age," initiated by dpa and the Hamburg Authority for Culture and Media. The study was conducted by the Leibniz Institute for Media Research. The results were presented and discussed today at the Media Dialogue Hamburg.

This is first time that a study has provided such a precise and differentiated breakdown of how young people deal with news. As a result, #UseTheNews provides new and sound insights for media companies and media education. Even if many of those surveyed frequently use social media, this does not automatically mean that they are not interested in news. After all, many of them also consume the news on television or radio, read a daily newspaper or inform themselves via the online offerings of traditional news providers. Thus, within one age and education group, different types emerge with specific characteristics when it comes to interest, use, attributed relevance to opinion formation, and levels of being informed. These four identified types are:

1. Journalistic information-oriented: high level of interest in news, extensive use of and attributing great relevance to journalistic sources with low relevance given to non-journalistic offerings; well informed
2. Low information-oriented: low level of interest in news, no use of and attributing little relevance to journalistic sources with likewise low use of and relevance to non-journalistic offerings; not well informed
3. Comprehensive information-oriented: high level of interest in news, extensive use of and attributing relevance to journalistic and non-journalistic offerings; well informed
4. Non-journalistic information-oriented: medium level of interest in news, no use of and attributing relevance to journalistic sources with high level of relevance given to non-journalistic offerings; not well informed

**Often feel that journalistic news lacks a connection to their own lives**

Half of teenagers and young adults don't think it's important to keep up with news and current events. In the case of journalistic news, they often feel a lack of connection to their personal everyday lives. In the 14 to 17-year-old age group, for example, this is said by more than two-thirds of those not interested in journalistic information (67 per cent). In the 18 to 24-year-old age group, the figure is slightly lower (59 per cent). But even among the journalistic information-oriented - i.e., the teenagers and young adults who have the strongest connection to traditional media - the figure is comparatively high in both age groups, at just under 40 per cent in each case.

At 46 per cent, a total of just under half of the 14 to 17-year-olds surveyed avail of journalistic offerings several times a week, but 58 per cent also look at non-journalistic sources. Around half of the teenagers and young adults do not consider it important to keep up with news and current events.

### **Friends, family, and acquaintances are most important for opinion formation**

News of a journalistic nature is no longer of decisive importance in opinion formation among teenagers and young people. Friends, family, and acquaintances are noticeably more relevant. Only among 18 to 24-year-olds in the journalistic information-oriented group is the personal environment on a par with journalistic news media (59 per cent and 61 per cent respectively). The high relevance of influencers when it comes to opinion formation is striking in the non-journalistic information-oriented group, but also among the comprehensive information-oriented group. In the group of 14 to 17-year-olds, 41 per cent of the comprehensive information-orientated, and in the group of 18 to 24-year-olds, 35 per cent consider influencers to be extremely and very important for the formation of their own opinions.

### **Like and comment**

The group of journalistic information-orientated between the ages of 18 and 24 is extremely reluctant to click "Like" on news. While only 28 per cent of them regularly click the "Like" button, 73 per cent of the non-journalistic information-oriented do so. The most active users on social networks in both age groups are the members of the comprehensive information-oriented group. Comments on journalistic news sites are posted only very sporadically by all groups.

### **Recommendations for action by the media and educational institutions**

"Journalistic providers should develop and test ways of highlighting the everyday relevance of their offerings for adolescents and young adults, while at the same time demonstrating that their skills and working methods enable them to deliver relevant information better than other information providers," say study authors Uwe Hasebrink, Sascha Hölig, and Leonie Wunderlich from the Leibniz Institute for Media Research in Hamburg. "It is only through solid journalistic craftsmanship as well as reliable and in-depth content from different perspectives that they will succeed in setting themselves apart from non-journalistic and opinionated actors and create convincing added value for which, if in doubt, people are willing to pay money," say the media researchers.

Furthermore, the authors note that knowledge about the functions and working methods of journalism is limited. Therefore, it seems advisable to pay more attention to media education in schools. The goal should be a better understanding of the basic functions of journalism in a democracy and the structures of the media system, including the role of public broadcasting, but also knowledge about the mechanisms employed to draw attention and the specific working methods of professional journalism.

### **Study design: Face-to-face survey of just over 1,500 people in the autumn of 2020**

The study was designed to address several key questions: What difference does it make where and how adolescents and young adults inform themselves? And what general patterns of orientation towards news can be observed in the digital media environment? To answer these questions, the study examined the interplay between news interest, news use, levels of being informed, and opinion formation. The focus was on the importance of the various journalistic and non-journalistic news offerings in this interplay. Eight group discussions with a total of 35 participants and a face-to-face survey with 500 people from each of the age groups 14 to 17-year-olds, 18 to 24-year-olds, and 40 to 50-year-olds (n = 1,508) were conducted. The samples form a structurally identical representation of the German-speaking population in private households in the respective age groups with regard to the variables age, gender, region, and education (50 per cent each for formally high and formally low). The fieldwork was conducted by the Gesellschaft für Innovative Marktforschung (GIM) between 12.10. and 06.12.2020.

### **Voices from the #UseTheNews board of trustees**

Julia Becker, chairwoman of the supervisory board, Funke Media Group

"It is precisely because young people use social media so intensively that there is a need for solidly researched, reliable journalism that focuses on facts and a diversity of voices, not on an agenda set by algorithms or influencers. More than ever, it is news organizations that are doing this democracy-preserving work. However, for all our reliability and credibility, we must also reach the same wavelength as young people - for example, through digital formats such as podcasts, videos, and online contributions directly from the lived environment of this generation. I am therefore delighted that #UseTheNews, as a competence centre for young target groups, is working with FUNKE to conceptualize these kinds of new formats for the media industry. However, the project does not release us, the publishers, from the obligation to make our editorial teams diverse enough in terms of personnel so that young people, with all their expectations and concerns, can find themselves reflected in our products."

Dr. Carsten Brosda, Minister of Culture and Media in the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg:

"The study is a guide for journalism and politics. Young people articulate a clear need for information and facts. The goal of professional editorial offices must be to make clear the value of good journalistic work, especially for the lives of young people. At the same time, there must be an improvement in the teaching of news competence and the role that journalism plays in the

democratic public sphere. Public educational institutions have an important responsibility here. #UseTheNews can make important contributions to both aspects."

Dr. Peter Frey, editor-in-chief, ZDF

"The #UseTheNews study makes it clear once again how important it is that we reach out to the younger target group. We want to reach teenagers and young adults where they are active anyway: in the digital networks. We have to prepare our journalistic content in a way that makes it suitable for these platforms. We're already succeeding in some places, but not across the board yet. It is particularly important that we do better at translating this content and explain what concrete effects news from politics and business has on the everyday lives of young people."

Prof. Dr. Kai Gniffke, director general, Südwestrundfunk

"Our task as a public service broadcaster is to get young people excited about news content. It's about presenting relevant topics in an exciting way for this target group. To do this, we connect in-depth research and reliable information to the realities of young people's lives. We will also reach out to young users in the information sector with our reorganized news offering – in order to involve the whole of society in the democratic process. #UseTheNews provides us with important insights and exciting findings for this."

Peter Kropsch, chief executive officer, dpa

"The results of the study show emphatically that the media industry needs to reach out more to young people. Providers of journalistic news formats face the challenge of having to constantly fight to maintain their relevance. In the #UseTheNews project, we are working together in a strong team to find the right answers for our future offerings. Because only journalism that has real and tangible value for the lives of the younger generation can fulfil its social mission in the long term."

About #UseTheNews

The nationwide project #UseTheNews gets to the bottom of young people's news use and literacy and develops new information and educational offerings. In a News Literacy Lab, new news offerings are designed on the basis of the study results. The News Literacy Lab is supported by journalism experts from the Hamburg University of Applied Sciences (HAW). In addition, under the title Open News Education (ONE), educational offers, teaching materials, and training courses for teachers are being developed to strengthen the teaching of media literacy in schools. #UseTheNews was initiated by the German Press Agency dpa and the Hamburg Authority for Culture and Media. The project is supported by a board of trustees consisting of well-known figures from the media and politics.

More: [www.dpa.com/de/usethenews](http://www.dpa.com/de/usethenews)

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Medieninhalte



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