WAN-IFRA Report | January 2024

World Press Trends Outlook 2023-2024

The annual global survey, analysis and report on publishers' business and predictions

World Association of News Publishers

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World Association of News Publishers

World Press Trends Outlook 2023-2024

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About the report

As we "go to press" on another edition of World Press Trends Outlook, we sincerely hope some of the optimism that publishers shared with us in our annual survey rings true in 2024 and beyond.

If you choose the 35,000-foot view (um, sort of close to 11,000 metres) of the industry, it's definitely difficult to have a clear vision of how this year will play out. Crucial elections globally are already signaling potential chaos, bringing with them rampant mis-/disinformation. Two major conflicts – Gaza and Ukraine – rage on without end in sight, bringing more economic and geo-political instability. Inflation just keeps chugging unabated.

Closer, on the ground, challenges also abound. News publishers face the double-edged sword of AI – as do other industries. Trust in news (news flash!) continues to wane. Platforms are pulling out of the business. Cookies are (finally) disappearing as many news orgs scramble to adapt to a new digital advertising ecosystem. The list can go on and on.

Despite all that, publishers remain optimistic for this year and the next few years, according to our survey results. And for one "simple" reason: In each of the challenges mentioned above also lies real opportunity.

AI? Despite all the fears, speed bumps and bigger challenges, publishers overwhelmingly see the potential of how AI can bolster their journalism and business. Trust in news? Huge news events like elections offer publishers the ideal occasion to reaffirm their role as a trusted destination. Platforms exiting news? An opportunity for publishers to truly embrace audiences-first, user-needs strategies to deepen engagement and, yes, grow their audiences. Cookies disappearing? An opportunity (again) for publishers to go all-in on first-party data for a more predictable, sustainable future.

Our report bears out much of this, but we also see this level of optimism and opportunity in our high-level events, initiatives (like Table Stakes Europe), and everyday discussion with members. Rooted in all of that is ongoing innovation that we see every day. Yes, this industry tends to move slowly to change, but it's clearly moving in the right direction.

Methodology

This report is primarily based on the findings of an online survey distributed to WAN-IFRA members and other senior media executives between July and September 2023, and was available in four languages (English, French, Spanish and German).

Survey participants were typically members of the senior team at a newspaper or a newspaper group. Based on the information provided by our respondents, a third (66%) are C-Suite (CEOs, Publishers, Managing Directors). A further third is either a Commercial Director/Heads of Strategy or Executive Editor.

We received 175 complete responses from 60 nations around the world. Using classifications developed by the World Bank, 58% of respondents come from developed economies and 42% from developing economies. Our sample also features a wide range of different countries with respondents coming from countries as diverse as Argentina, Canada, Russia, and Indonesia. They also came from some of the world's largest media markets, including Germany, India, the United States, and the United Kingdom.

Through the data and insights that they provided, we are able to comprehend the attitudes of today's industry leaders in a variety of business and editorial roles. Their observations, regarding the sector's present and future, can be seen throughout this report.

As ever, we want to express our appreciation to everyone who participated in this annual survey. This report would not be possible without their contributions.

A huge thank you to all of our contributors: Damian Radcliffe, Dr. Francois Nel, and Teemu Henriksson. Last but not least, this report would not be possible without the support of our partner, Stibo DX.

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Executive Summary

After the sobering read seen in our 2022-23 report, this year's World Press Trends study strikes a more cautiously optimistic note, with more than half of the respondents conveying a positive outlook about their companies' business prospects for the foreseeable future.

This is despite publishers grappling with challenges on various fronts, including elevated inflation and interest rates, surging paper and printing expenses, continual shifts within advertising markets and audience behaviours, as well as wider geopolitical uncertainty reflected in conflicts in Ukraine, the Middle East and elsewhere. Exploring the origins of what some have referred to as a polycrisis, Thomas Homer-Dixon, a political scientist and executive director of the Cascade Institute at Royal Roads University in British Columbia, recently asked in Vox: "Why so much is going wrong at the same time"?

Meanwhile, wider strategic challenges such as the surge of Generative AI, changing relationships with platforms and continued challenges to press freedom and freedom of expression, also continue to vex many journalists and publishers.

In response, news publishers are inevitably looking closely at their revenue strategy, investment priorities, areas of focus, cost management, and their stance on areas such as AI and other technologies. We delve into these themes extensively within this report.

Our analysis is founded on comprehensive insights shared with WAN-IFRA during the summer. From July to September 2023, we collected responses to an online survey from 175 C-suite and senior news executives spanning 60 distinct countries. Once again, their valuable insights serve as the cornerstone of this long-running annual study.

Here is a summary of some of the most important findings from our new 2023-24 research.

Business Outlook

After the pessimism we saw last year, more publishers are upbeat about the future.

- **Growing optimism:** Many publishers are positive about the next 12 months as well as their prospects down the line. More than half of respondents (55%) said they were "optimistic" about the next 12 months, even more (58%) for three years hence. This is in contrast to last year when more than half of respondents (55% again) told us they were pessimistic about the short-term future of their company.
- **Increased revenues are part of this story:** Publishers tell us that they expect their revenues to grow by 15.2% in 2023. This is expected to hit nearly 19% in 2024. Diversification efforts may be playing a role in this increased confidence.
- **Digital transformation is ongoing:** In an era where disruption is the norm, companies are consistently seeking to stay ahead of the curve. In line with last year, nearly four in 10 (39%) of companies describe their digital transformation efforts as "advanced." Similar numbers (41%) say they are "emergent" with few feeling they are a long way behind – or ahead – of their peers in this arena.

The Big Financial Picture

Despite a challenging geo-political outlook, the revenue outlook is perhaps surprisingly buoyant.

- **Revenue expectations are up:** Looking ahead to 2024, survey participants anticipate revenues to grow by 18.5% vs. 2023. Even in 2023, they project that their overall revenue will increase by 15.2% compared to last year.
- **Profit margins have bounced back:** Collectively, our sample forecasts that profits in 2023 will be up 5% in the past 12 months. That's back to the levels seen in 2021, and up from the slight drop in profits (-1%) reported by our respondents in 2022.

Revenue Sources

Advertising and print revenues continue to be the leading revenue sources. However, other income streams are continuing to emerge.

- **Advertising retains pole position:** Within our sample, advertising revenue remains the dominant source of income, comprising nearly half (43%) of projected income over the next 12 months.
- **Reader revenue accounts for just over a third of income:** Despite concerted efforts to increase subscriptions, across both print and digital sources, reader revenue is projected to contribute around 35% of total earnings in the coming year.
- **Print drives more than half of all revenue:** When combined, print advertising and circulation generate more than half (57.5%) of the total income seen by our survey respondents. That represents a slight increase from the figure (56.8%) in our 2022-23 report.

Investment and Expenditure

Investment in content and tech remains critical for today's publishers.

- **Editorial continues to make up nearly a third of all costs:** This is some way ahead of the next biggest area of expenditure for publishers, print production at 17.8% of outgoings. Both of these fields, however, saw slight drops in the past year in terms of the % of total expenditure publishers are attributing to them.
- **Product development costs are now on par with Advertising and Sales:** Reflecting the growing importance of product thinking and development, this now accounts for 12.8% of expenditure, only slightly behind outgoings related to sales and advertising (13.1%).
- **Developing revenue streams remains a key strategic focus:** In line with last year, 83% of our sample (vs. 84% in 2022-23) identified reader revenue as a priority area for investment in the coming year. This is closely aligned with product development and R&D (82%) and developing other revenue streams (80%), all of which were acknowledged by more than eight in 10 respondents as essential areas for investment.

Looking Ahead

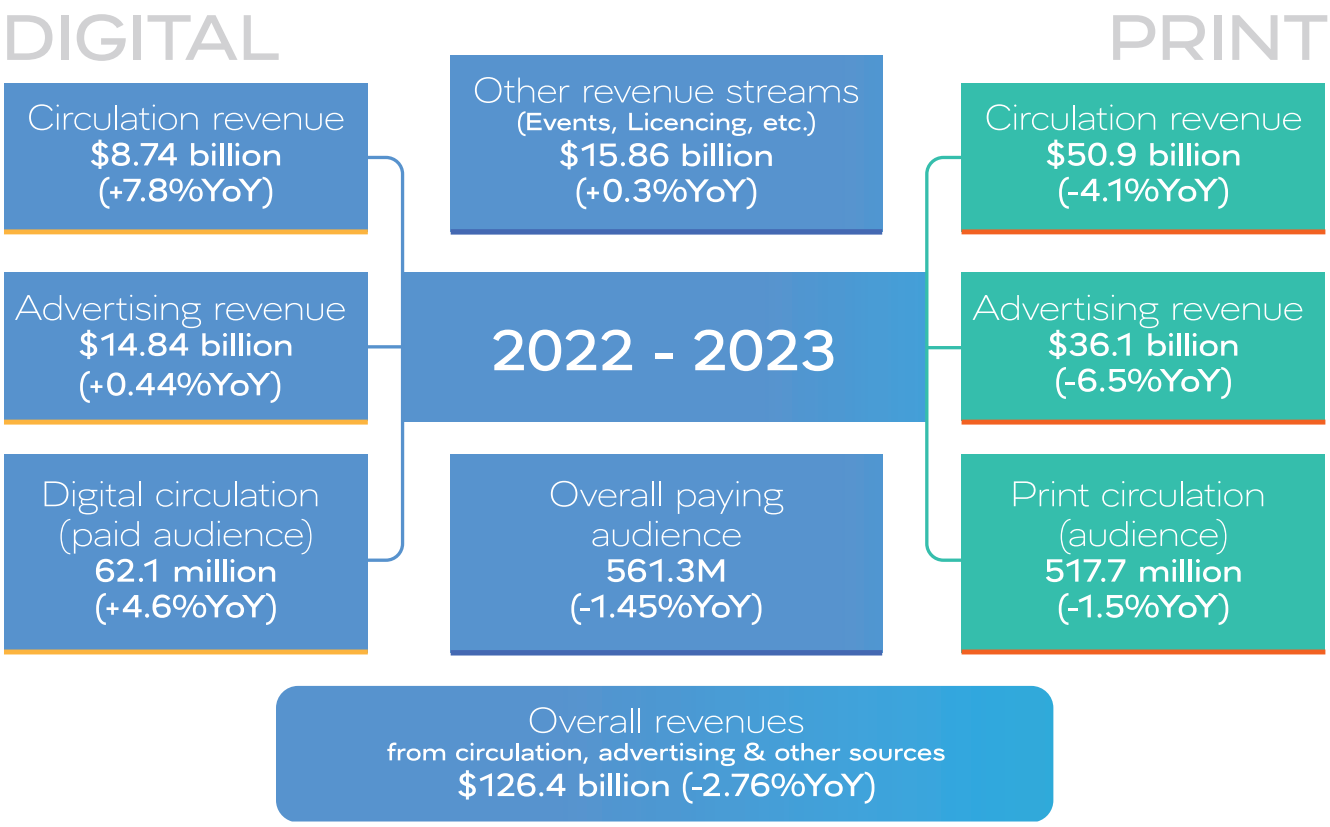
Diversification efforts inch forward, while press freedom backslides and relationships with platforms plateau.

- **AI is, not surprisingly, the priority investment tech area for the next year:** Almost all our respondents (87%) identified AI and Automation as the leading area to invest in over the coming 12 months, closing followed by Data Analytics and Intelligence (86%), much of which is also underpinned by AI technologies.
- **Revenues are becoming more diversified:** Other income streams – beyond the core reader and advertising revenues seen across digital and print – are expected to grow by 2.9% this year (from 18.8% to 21.7%) as events, grant funding and business services become more significant areas of focus for publishers.
- **Relationships with platforms have plateaued:** Just over one in five (22.7%) of respondents told us that this dynamic had got worse in the past year. Despite declining referral traffic and reduced funding and support for journalism, over a third of respondents (36%) said there had been no change in this relationship. Over four in 10 (41.3%) said the connection had got better.
- **Press freedom continues to be increasingly threatened:** Nearly half (47%) of survey participants have seen their staff or organization had been targeted by cyber-attacks. More than half (56%) reported experience of online harassment and six in 10 (61%) noted that they had been denied access to information.
- **New outlets in developing markets often face additional challenges:** Over half of participants from developing nations said their staff faced threats from their own government (52% vs. 10% in developed countries). A similar number (50%) said they had experienced legal intimidations and retaliation, although a third (33%) of those in developed markets reported they had also experienced this issue.

Chapter 1

Global Snapshot of Key Performance Indicators

In a vacuum, the figures reported here indicate a shrinking industry. That is indeed true as traditional print revenues continue to decline YoY and the (so-far) increases in digital revenues and other revenue streams don't quite cancel those out. But there is promise in the latter that gives publishers optimism.



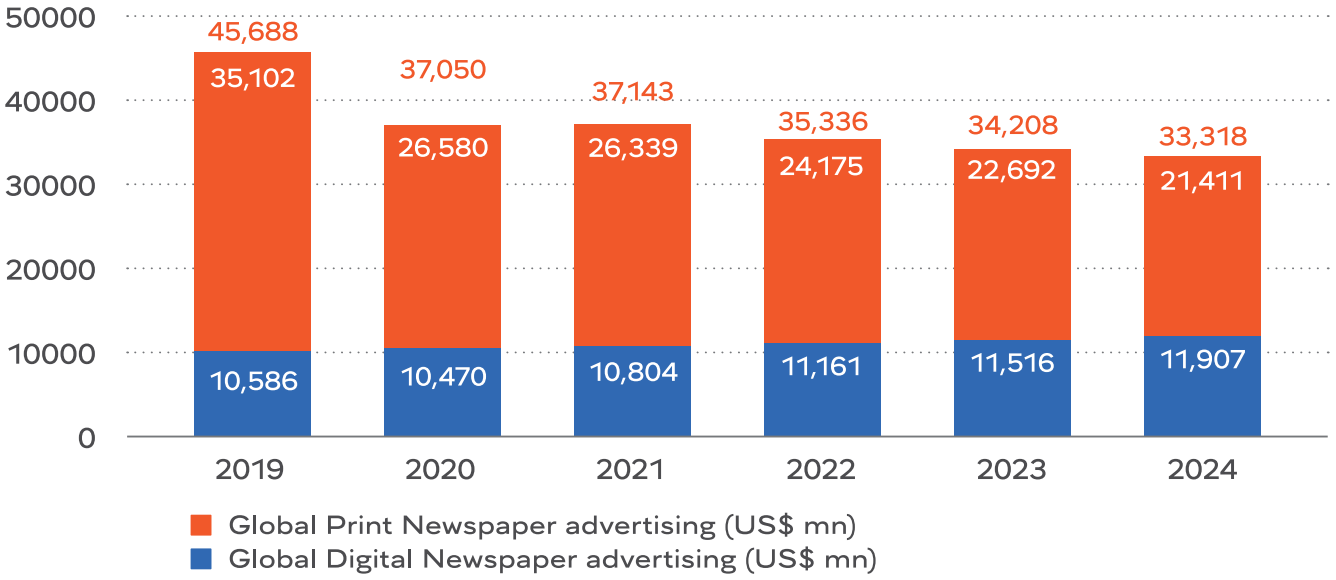
Source: WPT analysis of WPT Outlook survey and historical data. * Figures based on daily and weekly publications.

The data above is based primarily on PwC's Media and Entertainment Outlook, World Press Trends historical data (including weekly newspapers) and our publisher survey. And for the second straight year, the optimism from the nearly 180 publisher respondents to our survey paints a much different perspective from that of PWC's findings.

We conducted our survey from July to September, and publishers were again projecting an upbeat outlook for 2023 business results. They told us that they expect their revenues to grow by 15% in 2023, and as much as 19% in 2024. Yet, the global snapshot above shows an increasingly shrinking industry financially, as overall revenues declined by 2.76% compared to 2022. Much of that is, predictably, because of the even deeper declines in both print circulation (-4.1%) and advertising (6.5%) revenue – which most publishers still lean on heavily to prop up their business and to transition to a more digitally sustainable future.

On the positive side, publishers continue to focus on diversifying their revenue streams. For many, that means relying more on digital reader revenue strategies vs. the volatile digital advertising market. But as we pointed out last year and again this year, publishers are increasingly pivoting to new revenue streams beyond advertising and subscription/circulation sales. In fact, publishers told us "other revenue streams" will make up nearly 19% of their overall revenue in 2023, and as much as 21.6% in 2024. But as you can see in the chart above, the steeper and more impactful losses of print revenue make those marginal digital revenue gains and the other revenue streams' development even more urgent – at least according to PwC's findings.

Ad revenue development: As global ad spend grows, news media spend declines

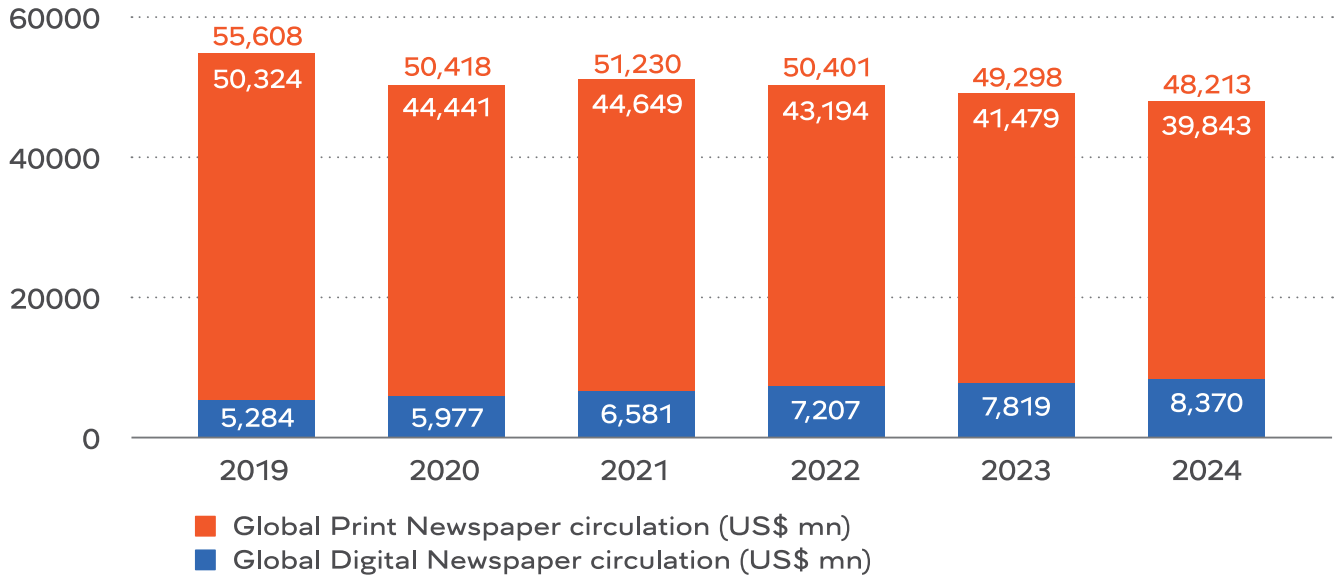


Source: WPT analysis of PwC Entertainment & Media Outlook 2022-2026.

While the global ad market was expected to grow 5.8% in 2023 year, according to global ad agency GroupM's year-end forecast, both GroupM and PwC expects news media advertising to decline by about 4.6% in 2023 but down slightly less in 2024 (3.1%).

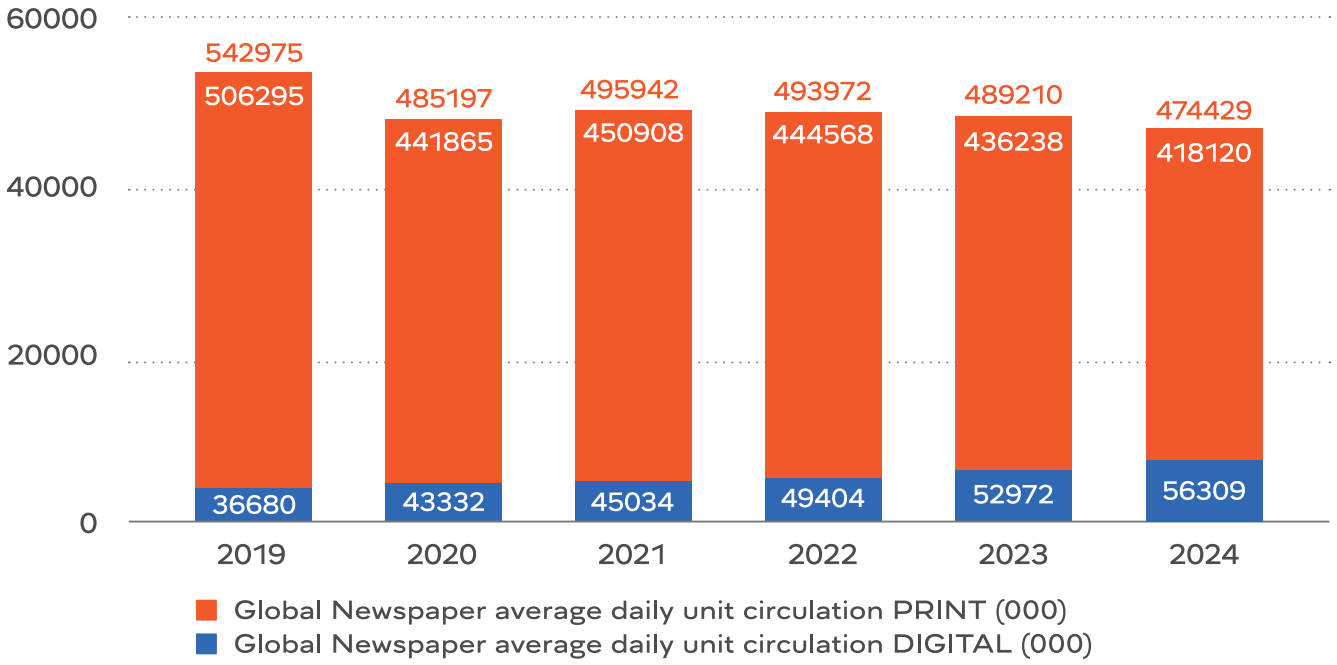
Print advertising was down by 6.2% in 2023, according to PwC, while digital advertising increased by 3.2% YoY. Print advertising is expected to slump by 5.7% in 2024 (YoY), not as bad as 2023, while digital advertising is forecasted to be up 3.4%, according to PwC. With several elections around the world, the Olympics in Paris on the calendar, forecasters anticipate more bullish ad spend. Much of this is tempered by the ensuing (delayed) cookie-less world and the fact that the uptick in digital will again not make up for more impactful losses on the print side – at least globally.

Daily circulation revenue: Print declines outpace digital progress



Source: WPT analysis of PwC Entertainment & Media Outlook 2022-2026.

Total paid-for daily circulation: Trends follow circulation revenue



Source: WPT analysis of PwC Entertainment & Media Outlook 2022-2026.

Total circulation revenue declined by 2.2% in 2023 and is forecasted to do the same in 2024. Paid-for digital subscriptions and other forms of reader revenue continue to be a major focus for many publishers around the world. And in 2023, digital circulation revenue (subscriptions) grew by 8.4% YoY, improving on the forecasted 7% in late 2022. Despite that increase in 2023, PwC is anticipating a similar forecast for 2024 – 7% growth. But that would continue a positive trend over five years that has seen a rise of almost 60%.

Again, as significant and important as print still is to publishers' business, YoY print circulation revenue continues to decline unabated. In 2023, it fell by 4% and is forecasted to do the same in 2024.

Overall, circulation figures (units, not revenue) follow a similar pattern to revenues, but down a bit more than revenues 3% in 2023 and forecast the same for 2024. Many publishers continue to increase the prices of their print subscriptions and single-copy sales. Total paid-for digital circulation of daily publications is expected to grow almost 6% into 2024 continuing the five-year trend that has seen an increase of 31%. Print circulation is expected to decline by 4.3% in 2024.

Chapter 2:

Business Outlook



In this initial chapter focused on our survey, we delve into our respondents' views on the present media environment and their perspective on the outlook for news organizations in the coming years.

Cautious optimism

Despite the numerous challenges and persistent uncertainties that they face, publishers are feeling more optimistic as they approach 2024, particularly in contrast to the same period last year when there was significant apprehension. Furthermore, their optimism extends to the long-term future, despite the continued unpredictability of what lies ahead.

Many of the issues we highlighted last year – such as rising inflation, high energy and paper costs, as well as the continued economic and geo-political instability stemming from the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza – have not disappeared. Our data suggests that many media leaders have adapted to these challenges, perhaps recognising that these concerns may not go away anytime soon.

Just over half (55%) of respondents told us that they are optimistic about the year ahead, with 45% pessimistic about the next 12 months. This represents a complete one-eighty from last year's survey (when 55% indicated they were pessimistic about the forthcoming year, with 45% telling us that they were optimistic).

Looking ahead, business optimism rises to nearly six in 10 (58%) of survey participants when asked about the outlook for their company's prospects over the next three years. Within this, nearly one in 10 (9.5%) and (8.5%) indicated that they were "very optimistic" about their prospects in the next year and the next three years, respectively.

Reflecting on the findings from the latest (2023) Digital News Report, Professor Rasmus Kleis Nielsen outlined five reasons for "evidence-based optimism" including opportunities to respond to news avoidance, the continued levels of trust enjoyed by a number of news media brands, as well as the stability of subscriptions.

James Breiner, a bilingual consultant (English and Spanish) on digital journalism and newsroom leadership, even ran a series of articles on "reasons for optimism" on his Substack, highlighting individual outlets such as elDiario.es in Spain, as well as wider trends including journalistic collaboration, podcasting and the emergence of local news start-ups.

The "coming of age" of new local outlets was also a theme that Ben Smith at Semafor warmed to in a more US-centric list published at the start of the year. Smith also shares an observation from Jim Bankoff, the Chairman and CEO of Vox Media, outlining the potential benefits of major tech platforms deprioritising news.

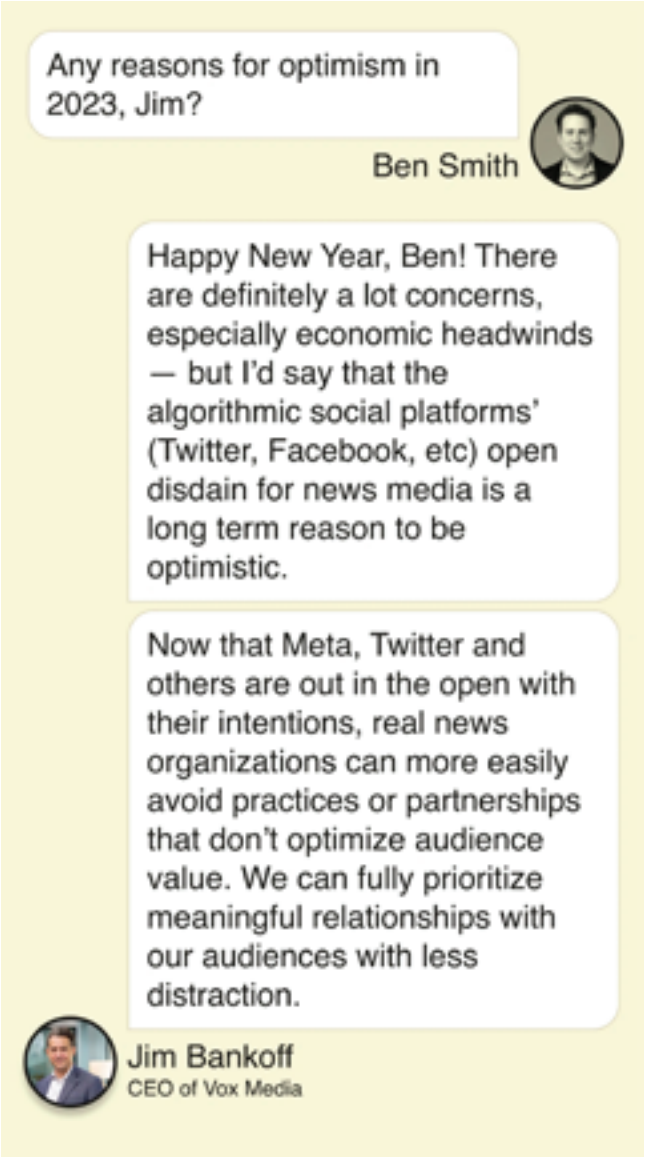


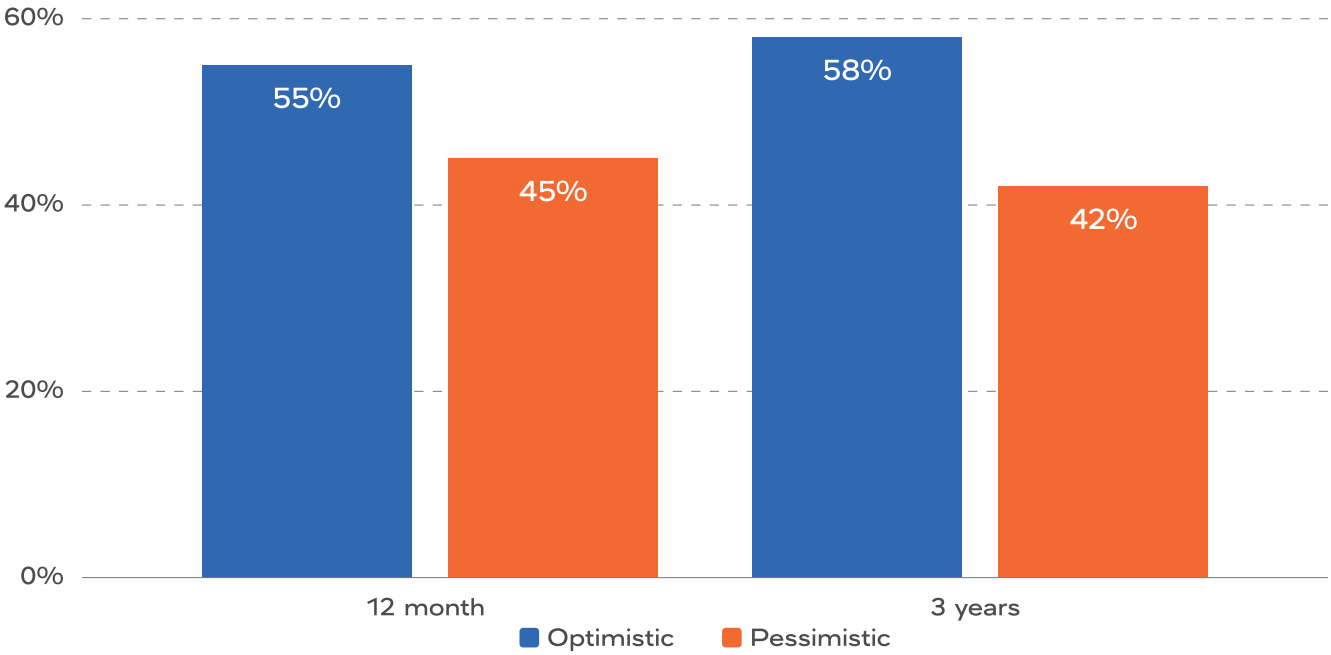
Image via Semafor

At the same time, Smith notes "already cooling advertising markets" and the challenge of reaching new subscribers, as well as keeping existing ones. These are "two big reasons that 2023 will be a hard year," he wrote.

That's a sentiment that clearly chimed with some of our respondents, 45% of whom told us that they were less optimistic about their company's outlook over the next year. That figure dropped, slightly, to 42% when looking at a three-year timeframe.

Nevertheless, even those who are more unenthusiastic about their prospects for the year ahead were less pessimistic than we have seen in our last two surveys. This year, for example, fewer than one in 10 respondents (9.6%) ranking their confidence level between 2-3 on a 10-point scale. In our 2022-23 survey, that figure was nearly double (18.5%).

How do you feel about your company's business prospects: For the next 12 months, the next 3 years?



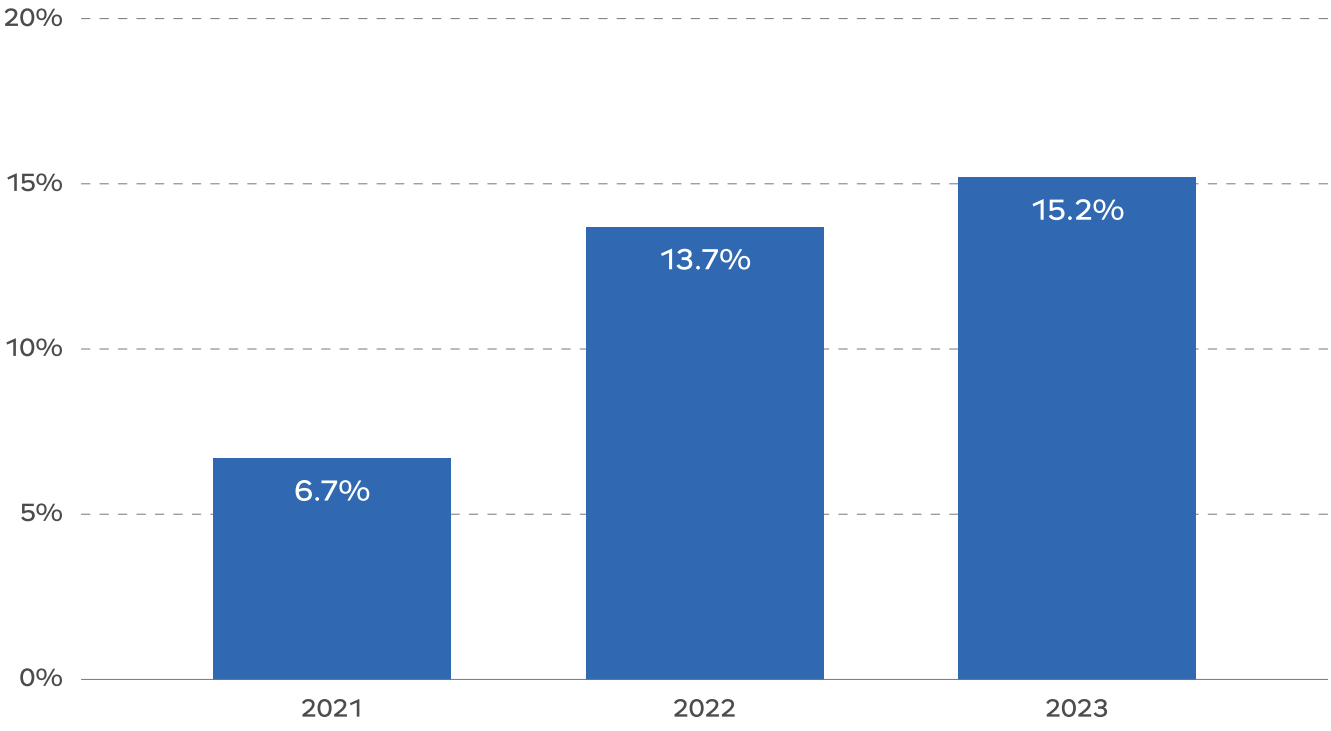
Source: WPT Outlook Survey 2023-24.

"It will only get better. Different, but better," proclaimed the founder and publisher of the Idaho-based local news site Boise Dev, Don Day, in Nieman Lab. "That's what an optimist would say."

Revenues projected to rise

Underpinning this optimism is a sense that revenues this year will increase. Globally, publishers expect revenues to grow by 15% in 2023 compared to 2022.

What are your overall revenue expectations for this year compared to the previous year?



Source: WPT Outlook Survey 2023-24.

As we share in the next chapter, print remains the predominant revenue stream for our survey respondents. Despite the ongoing transition to digital and the rise in digital subscriptions seen by some outlets, other digital revenues – such as advertising – remain challenging and in some cases are rather anaemic.

News publishers are anticipating a highly successful year in terms of revenue for 2024, thanks to their ongoing emphasis on developing new revenue streams, which are becoming an increasingly significant aspect of their business.

Additionally, the upcoming elections in 2024 are expected to make a notable positive contribution to both revenues and audience engagement, as will the 2024 Paris Olympics. Presidential elections are scheduled in the United States and Russia, while India is scheduled to conduct general elections to select the government and parliament that will govern the country until 2029. In the United States, more than $10 billion is projected to be spent on political advertising in 2024, an increase of 13% on the 2020 election.

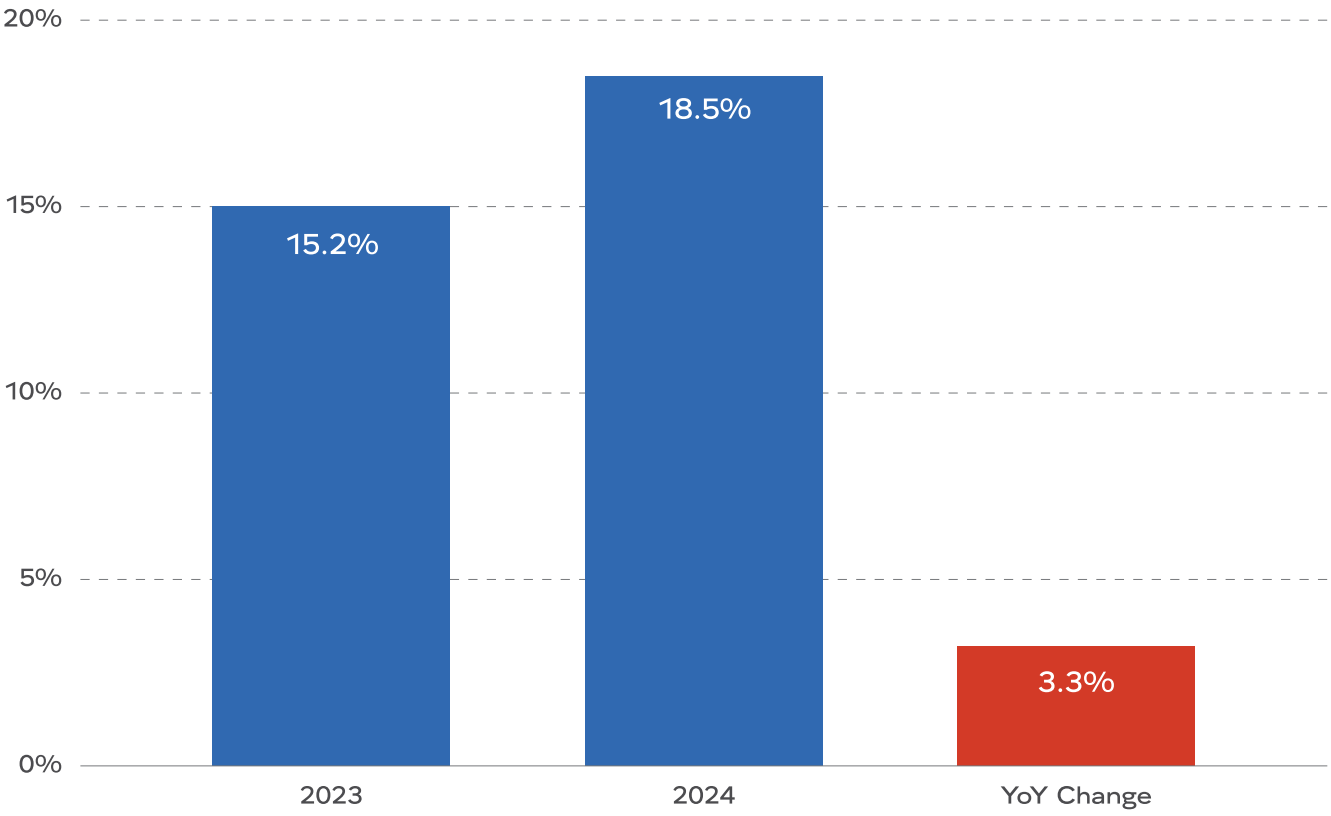
WARC predicts that global advertising spend will top $1trn for the first time ever in 2024, with worldwide advertising spend up 8.2% next year versus 4.4% in 2023.

Although around a third of this spend will be in the U.S. market, the fastest growing regions – according to WARC's analysis – will be South Asia (up 12% year-on-year) and the Middle East (up 6% year-on-year).

Furthermore, WARC predicts double-digit ad revenue growth in India during the next year and half, with the advertising market in the sub-continent worth nearly $14 billion in 2024.

Nitin Sinha, head of paid media at ad agency Laundry Service, told Marketing Brew that this was due to a combination of a maturing advertising market, coupled with a "massive audience of people equipped with mobile phones" as well as the emergence of an expanding middle class and the increased purchasing power this demographic has.

What are your overall revenue expectations for 2024 compared to 2023?



Source: WPT Outlook Survey 2023-24.

Digital transformation

The evolving relationships with platforms represent just one facet of the continual need for digital transformation that remains a constant reality for today's publishers.

The explosion of Generative AI (an area we dive into in more detail in Chapter 5) is perhaps the most top-of -mind example that publishers are grappling with today. This has the potential to impact everything from content creation to search and other routes to eyeballs.

However, alongside this issue du jour, many publishers continue to contend with long-standing digital transformation issues related to areas such as: digital skills, production and investment in digital channels, developing new revenue streams, upgrading their tech stack and analytics capabilities, as well as potentially closing or consolidating print and other non-digital operations.

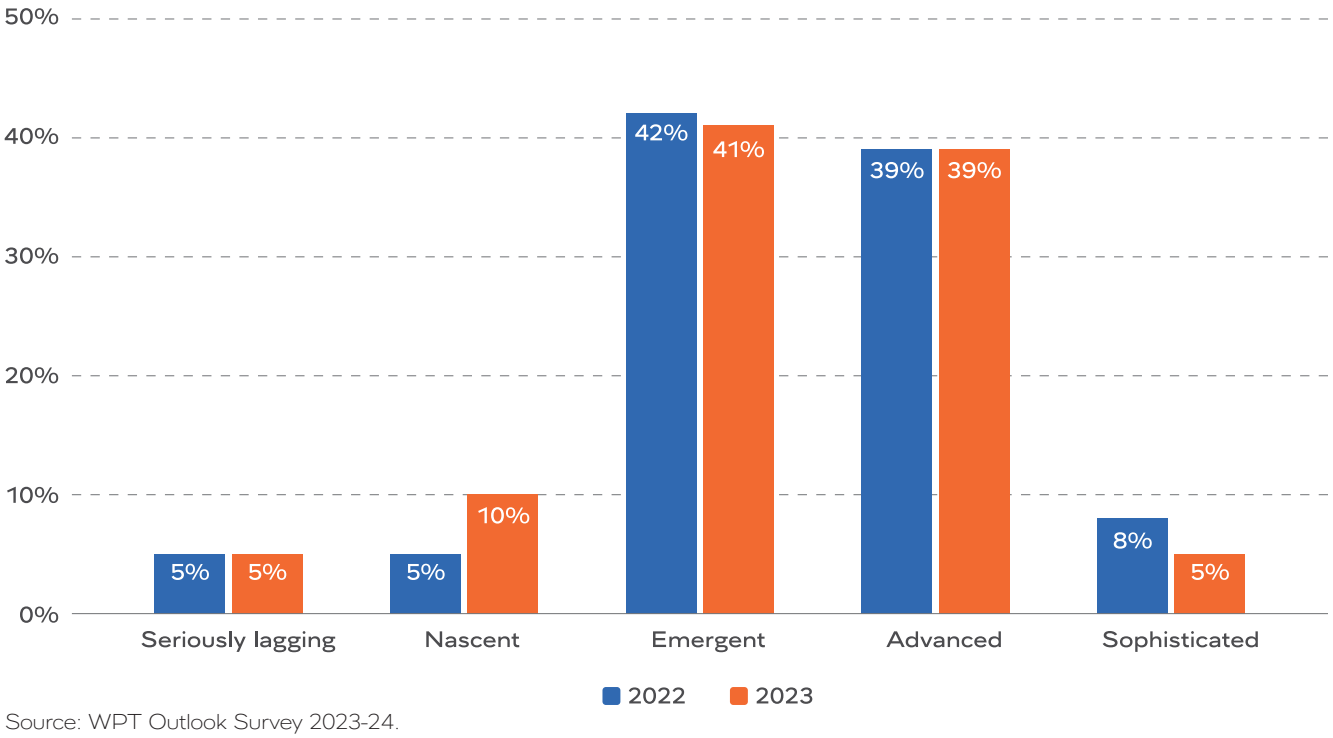
As Amit Zavery, the Vice President and General Manager for Google Cloud's Business Platform & Cloud Operations, put it in a 2020 Forbes article entitled Digital Transformation Isn't A Project, It's A Way Of Operating, companies need to: "Think of digital transformation less as a technology project to be finished than as a state of perpetual agility." If you are "always ready to evolve for whatever customers want next," then "you'll be pointed down the right path," he advised.

Perhaps because of this, many companies (41%) in our survey describe their digital transformation efforts as "emergent" although a similar number (39%) label their approach as "advanced."

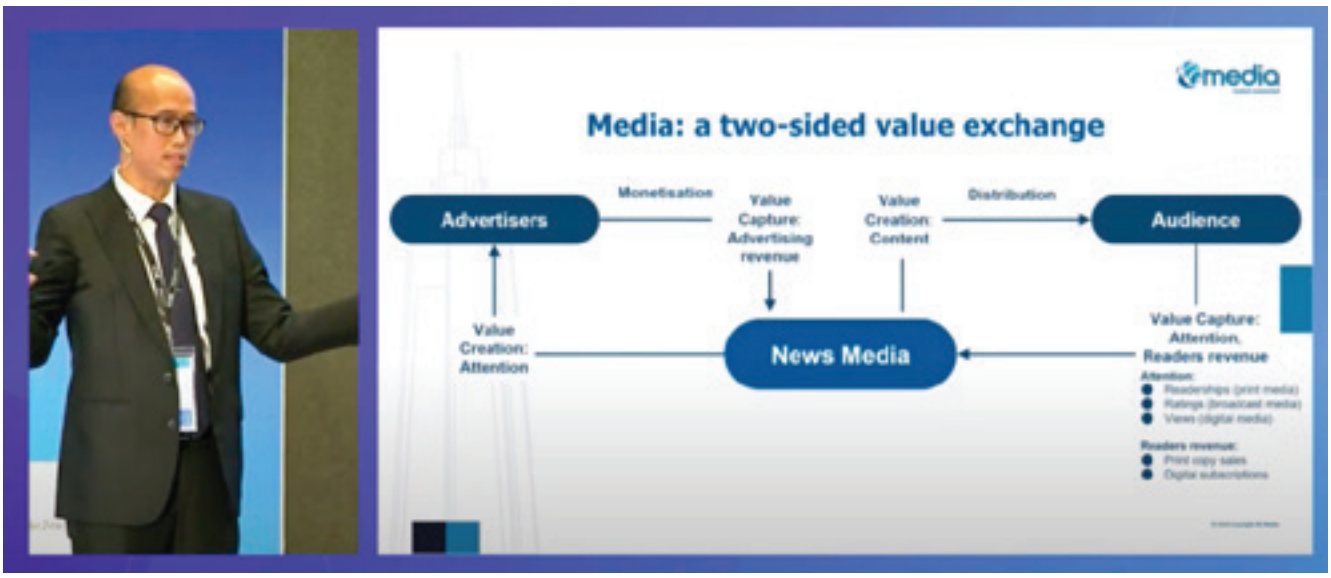
With transformation and disruption becoming the norm, it's an area where many companies are continually looking to invest and innovate.

This summer Andy Budiman Kumala, CEO, KG Media Indonesia, shared at WAN-IFRA's World News Media Congress in Taiwan how the company had invested heavily in video production as a result of changing audience habits. KG Media, which publishes Kompas, ,Indonesia's largest daily newspaper, and operates around 100 newsrooms across the archipelago, has nearly 650 video journalists who publish c.150,000+ videos each month. "Indonesia has always been more of a watching culture rather than a reading culture," he explained. "So when internet becomes cheaper or ubiquitous throughout the nation, we realise the biggest growth is not in text content, but in video content."

Regarding digital transformation, what stage would you say your news organization is in comparison to your market or region?



Source: WPT Outlook Survey 2023-24.



Bundiman Kumala speaking at WAN-IFRA's World News Media Congress, via WAN-IFRA

The need to be user-centric has also been reiterated by Jean-Marc De Jonghe from La Presse, a French-language news provider in Canada. Founded in 1884, the Montréal based newspaper became digital-only at the end of 2017, becoming an independent, not-for-profit media outlet a year later. De Jonghe reminded Twipe that the "user is not you" and that few users have "12 news apps on their phone."

This rationale may help to explain their continued investment in a tablet edition known as La Presse+, at a time when many published have turned their back on this medium. On March 21st, 2020, La Presse+ was accessed by more than 330,000 unique tablets, akin to 1.5x more readers than their highest-ever print run.



Image via La Presse



Image via ANJ – National Association of Newspapers

Published at 5.30am each day, the iPad app celebrated its 10th birthday in 2023. "Our daily edition is viewed on more than 248,500 digital tablets every day," the website reveals. "Our readers spend an average of 40 minutes per day on weekdays, 53 minutes on Saturday and 50 minutes on Sunday."

The investment – along with the wider pivot to digital – has clearly played off. (Although this was aided by considerable investment and planning, as well as the fact that at the time of the move to digital-only c.90% of their revenues were digital). More recently, AdWeek notes, La Presse reported a net profit of $11 million for the completed financial year.

In some cases, funders and platforms are also continuing to invest in efforts to support digital transformation. Supported by the National Association of Newspapers (ANJ) in Brazil; and the Google News Initiative (GNI) small and medium-sized outlets were able to access 200 hours of training and consultancy over a 16-week period, focused on efforts to diversify revenues and to better understand audiences.

A similar program in Chile saw the National Press Association (ANP) working with GNI and the Argentinian based Dosunos agency to support 12 Chilean media outlets over a six month period. With a focus on improving their digital performance, efforts such as an emphasis on UX, as well as news products such as videos and podcasts, saw organizations such as El Heraldo Austral and Diario El Rancagüino growing their audience by 33% and 46% respectively during this period.

Meanwhile in September 2023, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution (AJC) shared plans to "transform the storied daily newspaper into a modern media company." As part of this, AJC – which was founded in 1898 – pinpointed the need for investments in key news beats, increased video and audio storytelling capabilities, as well as new products and product development. The company aims to have 500,000 subscribers by the end of 2026.

Relationships with platforms

These investments represent a continued commitment from a major tech platform at a time when the relationship between most platforms (including Google) and news providers is undergoing a period of change.

The recently announced departure of Campbell Brown as Meta's head of news partnerships marks the next stage in the platform's reduced emphasis on news and in developing relationships with publishers.

After launching a dedicated news tab in the US back in 2019, the feature was revamped with an emphasis on local news a year later. The service launched in the UK – the first country outside of the States – in 2021. However, Facebook announced in September 2023 that it would be closing Facebook News in the U.K., France, and Germany in December.

"While we'll be deprecating Facebook News in these countries, we will honour our obligations under all existing Facebook News deals with publishers in the UK, France and Germany until they expire," their website stated in a post announcing the changes.

The move comes less than two years after the service launched in France.

Meanwhile, Chartbeat reported that Global traffic from Facebook traffic to news and media sites had continued to fall, a trend that started last year and which has been most acute in Latin America and North America. Facebook-referred traffic to sites in their network declined by 60% in the first half of the year in Latin America, 46% in North America and 46% in Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

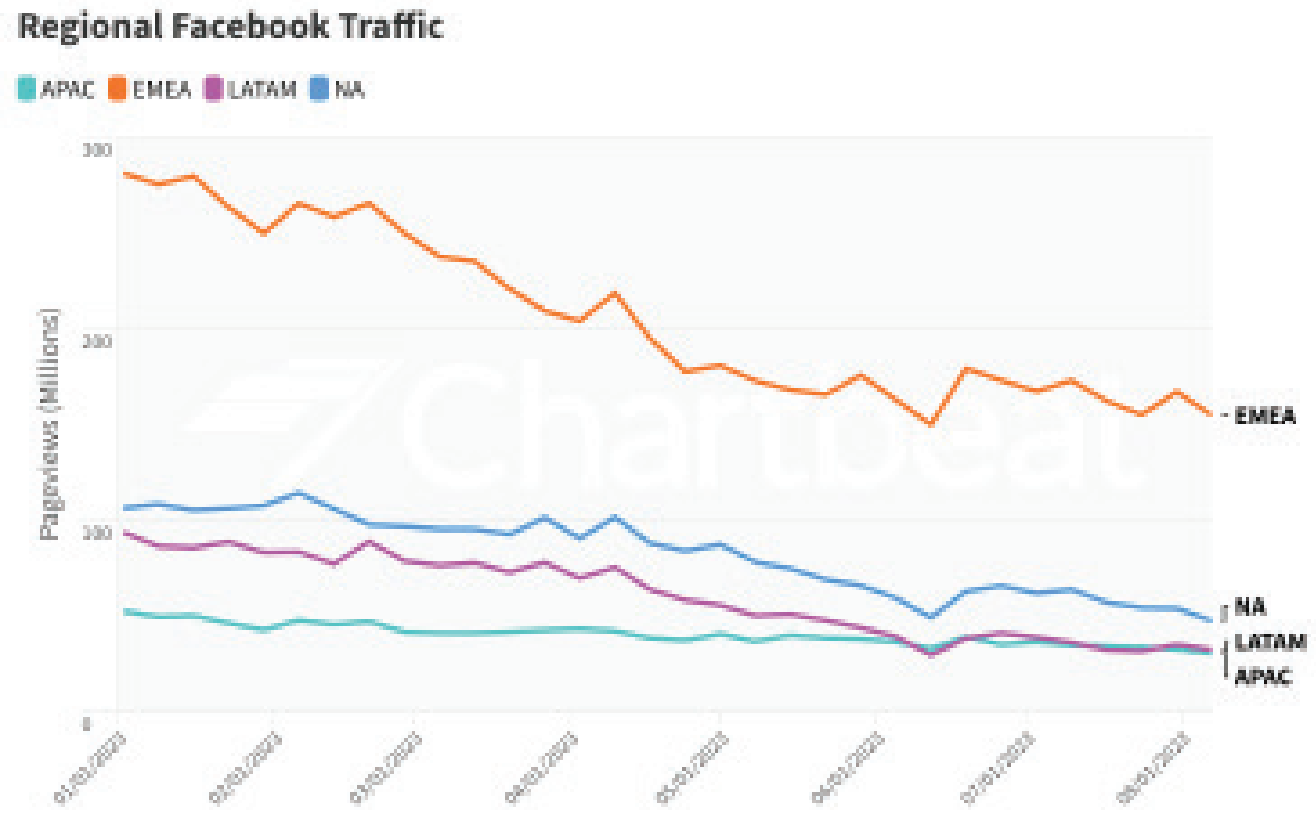


Image via ChartBeat

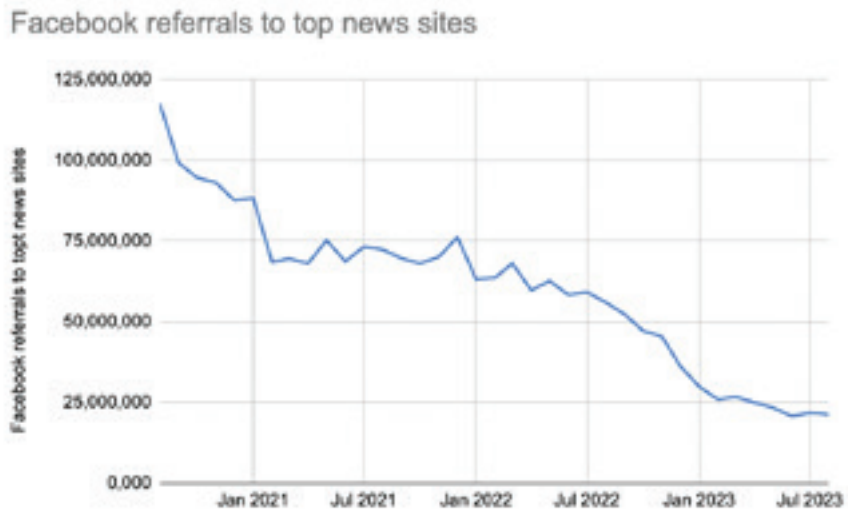
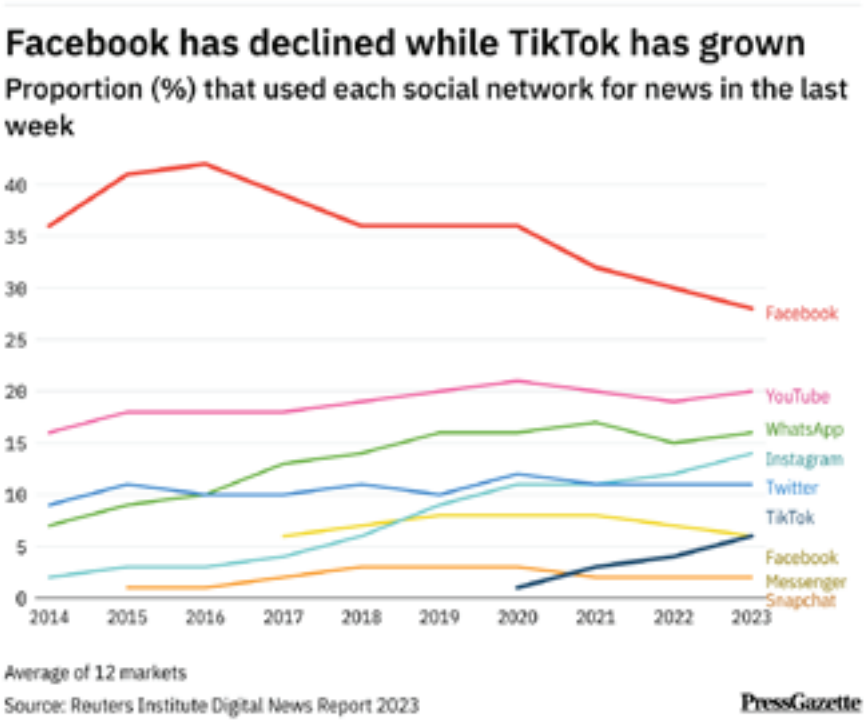


Image via Digiday

Throughout the summer other outlets told a similar story. Digiday, using data from Similarweb revealed that between August 2022 and August 2023, "global Facebook referral traffic to the top 30 or so news sites was down 62%." Some outlets, they disclosed had seen even bigger falls, with UK tabloid The Sun seeing an 84% decline during this period, Business Insider an 80% fall and The Guardian a 79% drop.

Algorithm changes aside, research by NERA Economic Consulting – and published by Meta earlier in the year – also suggested that changing audience habits also needed to be factored into this narrative. "The proportion of adults using Facebook for news fell by about a third between 2016-2022 from 45% to 30%," they noted, adding that "many Facebook users think there is 'too much' news on Facebook, including 21% of UK users, 22% of Americans, 20% of Australians, and 20% of Canadians."



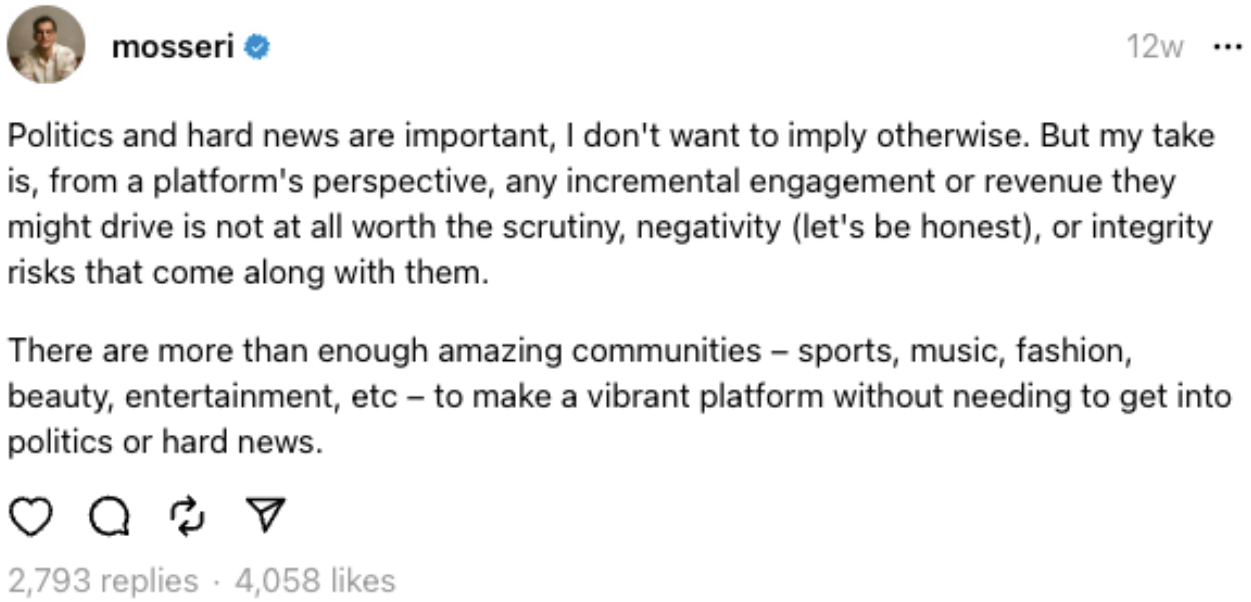


Image via Threads

The most recent Digital News Report has reaffirmed this trend, demonstrating that Facebook's significance as a news source has been diminishing over time, while other outlets such as Instagram and TikTok have only grown in importance.

And those publishers seeking solace in the potential for new Facebook products, like Threads (which launched in July 2023), to potentially act as fresh sources for traffic and referrals are likely to be disappointed. Adam Mosseri, the Meta executive responsible for Instagram, made it clear during the summer that the company's latest real-time text-based app, Threads, will not actively promote news and politics on the platform.

These developments played out against an increasingly contentious backdrop between platforms and regulators in several markets, with news publishers arguably caught in the middle.

After Facebook temporarily blocked news on Facebook in Australia back in 2021, the company did it again in 2023 in Canada. This meant, as the company explained "People in Canada will no longer be able to view or share news content on Facebook and Instagram, including news articles and audio-visual content posted by news outlets."

The move was in response to The Online News Act, which was passed in June by the Canadian parliament. It requires the likes of Facebook and Google to engage in commercial agreements with Canadian news publishers in return for their content appearing on these platforms.

In response, as reported in The New York Times, Meta stated that it had driven traffic to publishers, which they estimated to be worth over 230 million Canadian dollars, during a 12-month period ending in April 2022.

As Reuters observed, "the world's biggest social media company has been trying to reduce the prevalence of news and other civic content on its platforms in recent years as it faces regulatory pressure in key markets around the world." They also observed that the move, in Canada at least, appeared not to have dented traffic to the social network.

This model, sometimes referred to as a "link tax" has been put forward in a number of countries and even at a more macro level, with the proposed California Journalism Preservation Act aiming to mandate that "online platforms" pay a "journalism usage fee" to news providers when their content is featured on these platforms. This initiative seeks to counter the decline in the local news sector that has been well documented in the United States.

Relationships with some other platforms have also been quite charged over the past year. Twitter rebranded as X, and introduced paid checkmarks for organizations and individuals, removing verified status from users who refused to pay a monthly fee for the privilege. "Twitter had about 300,000 verified users under the original blue-check system — many of them journalists, athletes and public figures," AP said.

NPR in the United States essentially discontinued its presence on Twitter after Musk applied a label to the news organization's account, incorrectly insinuating that it was under state control. The outlet has not published on the platform since April, with its last tweets pointing users (it still has 8.7 million followers) to other ways that users can get news from them (beyond tuning in and listening).

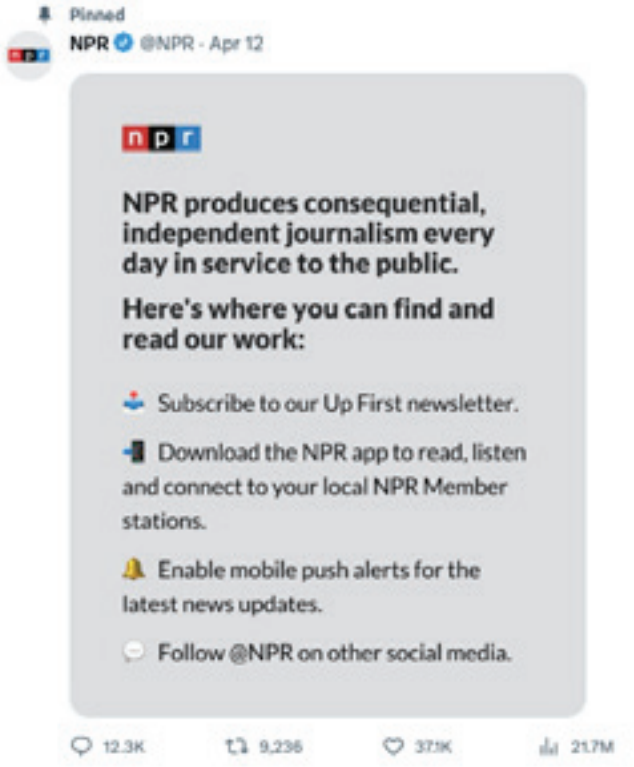


Image NPR's pinned – and last tweet - via Twitter

In the UK, Twitter changed the label to "publicly funded" on the main BBC account, after the broadcaster objected to an initial description that erroneously said the corporation was "government funded media."

Alongside these developments, many publishers have also witnessed a reduction in traffic from Twitter/X, as well as Facebook, over the past year. Analysis by Similarweb, and published by Digiday, found that global organic traffic from X fell for over 10 large publishers from July 2022 to July 2023, which included falls in referral traffic for Fox News down by 39%, Reuters by 67% and the BBC by 20%.

Meanwhile, The Washington Post reported that The New York as well as other platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Bluesky and Substack were throttling the speed of connections to these sites. The move "appeared targeted at companies that have drawn the ire of owner Elon Musk," The Post wrote.

The decision, first reported by Fortune in August – and coming into fruition in October – to remove headlines for articles shared to the platform is also likely to impact on publishers' referral traffic. It also reduces the sites accessibility, Mashable cautioned.

Although initially stated to be part of improving "esthetics" [sic] in a later tweet, owner Elon Musk noted that "our algorithm tries to optimize time spent on X, so links don't get as much attention, because there is less time spent if people click away." Time on site also matters to X at a time when Twitter's ad revenue has dropped by around half. is around 50%.

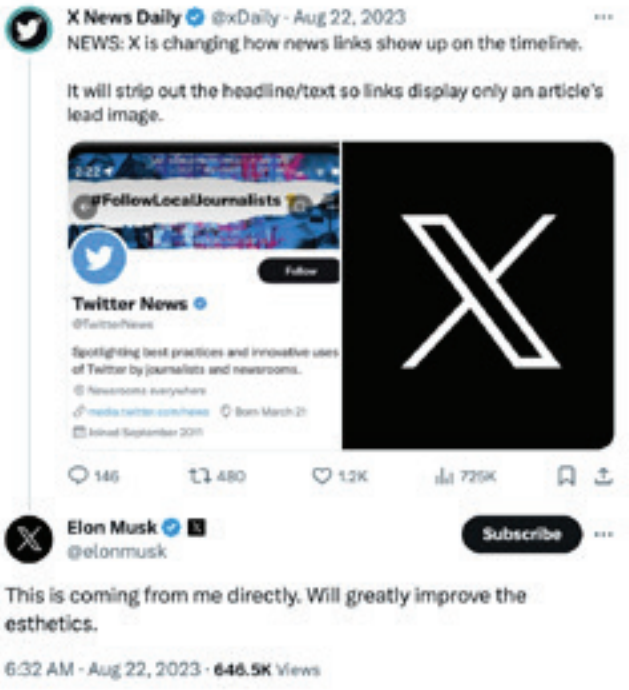


Image via Twitter

"Best thing is to post content in long form on this platform," Musk added.

That said, as with Facebook, declines in referral traffic have been part of a longer-term trend for many publishers.

As Sara Fischer at Axios has observed, platforms have increasingly been "lean[ing] into viral trends, instead of quality news. "While the news industry has known this day would come, many are still unprepared," she wrote, noting that "the over-reliance on social media traffic kept news publishers from focusing on building stronger consumer products of their own."

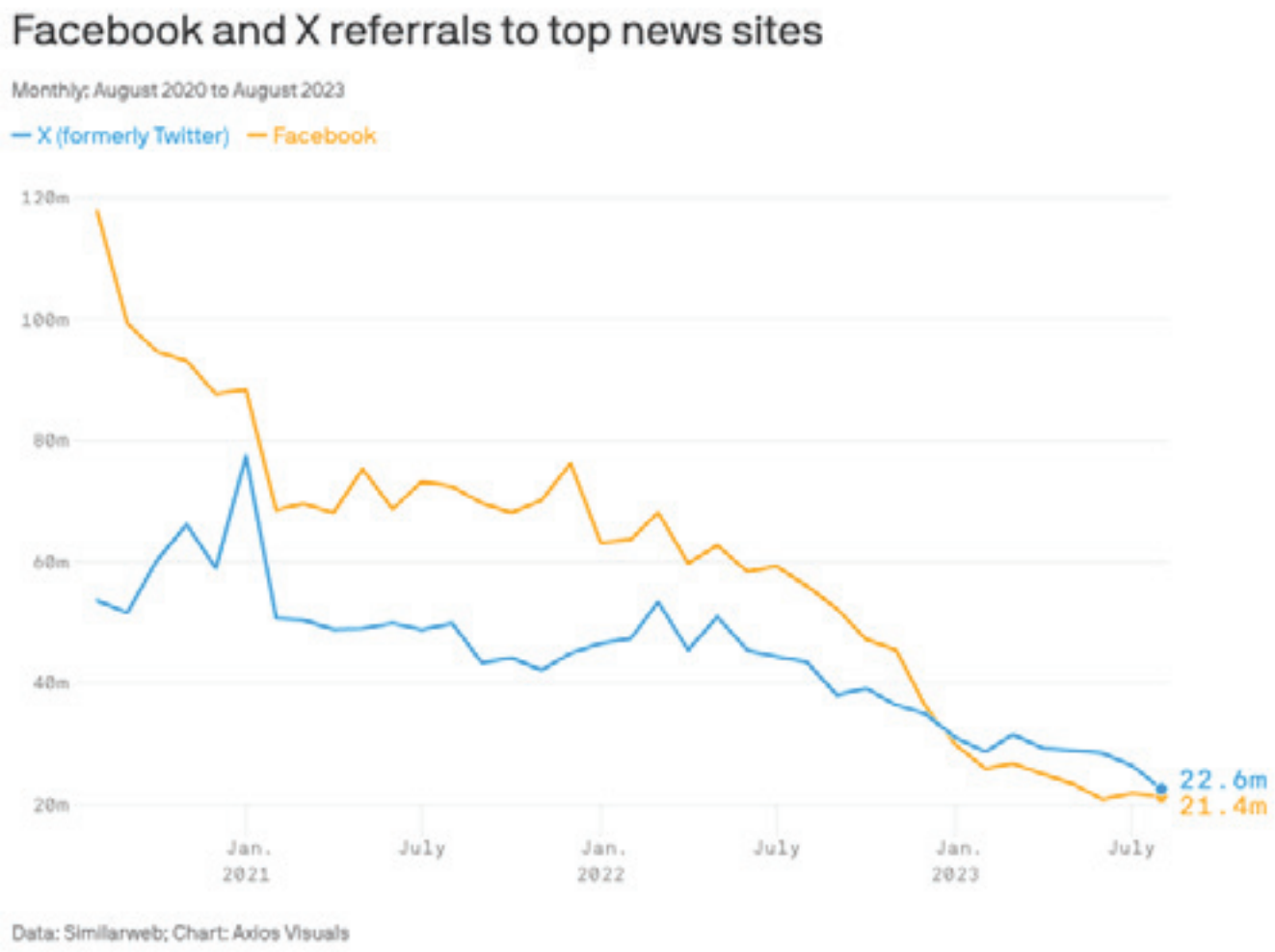


Image via Axios

Interestingly, despite all of this, our survey responses showed little change to last year when we asked them about their relationships with Big Tech. We might get a different answer to this question next year. But, for now, responses showed only a small variance from our last survey in summer 2022.

The reasons for this are not clear. As we outline in our upcoming revenue chapter, some publishers are still relying on some form of financial support from platforms. This includes newer, emerging, platforms, not just the Big Three of Google, Facebook and Twitter/X.

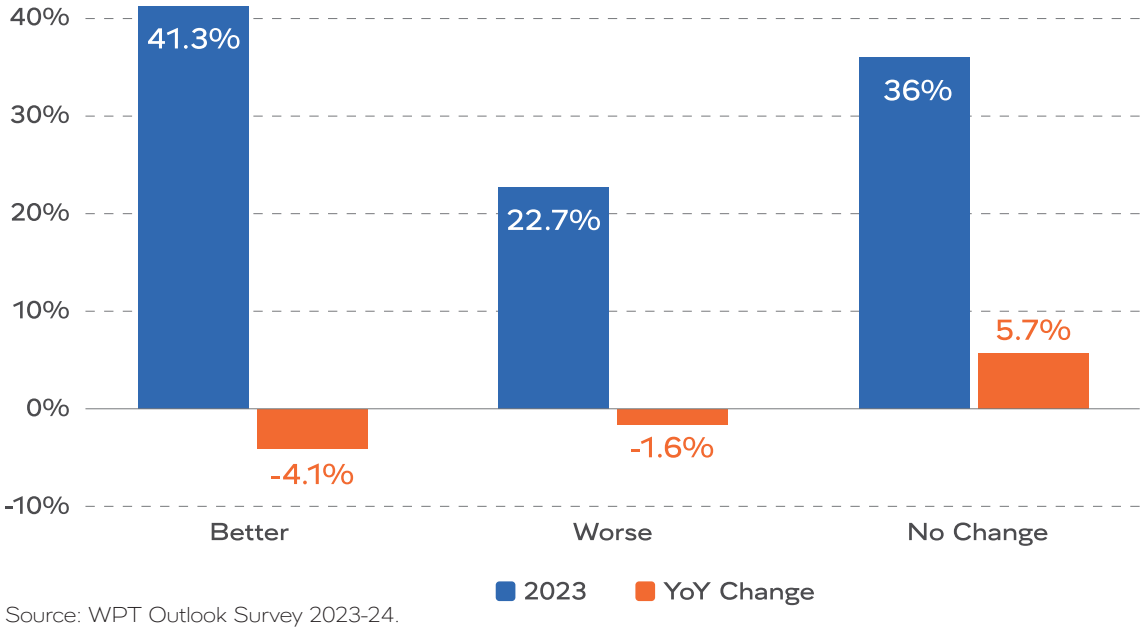
On the other hand, the response to our survey question may also reflect a shift in expectations about the platform-publisher relationship, as well as a move away from resources dedicated towards legacy platforms in favour of smaller and more emergent social networks like Mastodon, Reddit and Bluesky. As relationships with platforms mature, more publishers may also recognize that these dynamics are less about revenue, and more about brand recognition, as well as building relationships with audiences and online communities. The hope is that these relationships can then be parlayed into revenue elsewhere.

What constitutes "Big Tech" may also change with the emergence of new platforms like OpenAI. Although that opens another huge set of challenges for publishers, particularly in terms of issues related to copyright and the protection of IP, as well as the implications for changing consumer behaviours. We say more about some of these issues in Chapter 5, which is dedicated to AI.

The evolution of relationships with TikTok offers some valuable insights into how publishers are shifting their gaze.

For example, in May 2023, TikTok announced a new product - Pulse Premiere – designed to enable publishers to sell advertisements alongside their content on the platform. Initial partners included major US publishers and sports brands such as Pulse Premiere partners, which include Buzzfeed, Conde Nast, Dotdash Meredith,

Have relations with tech platforms got better or worse in the past year?



Source: WPT Outlook Survey 2023-24.

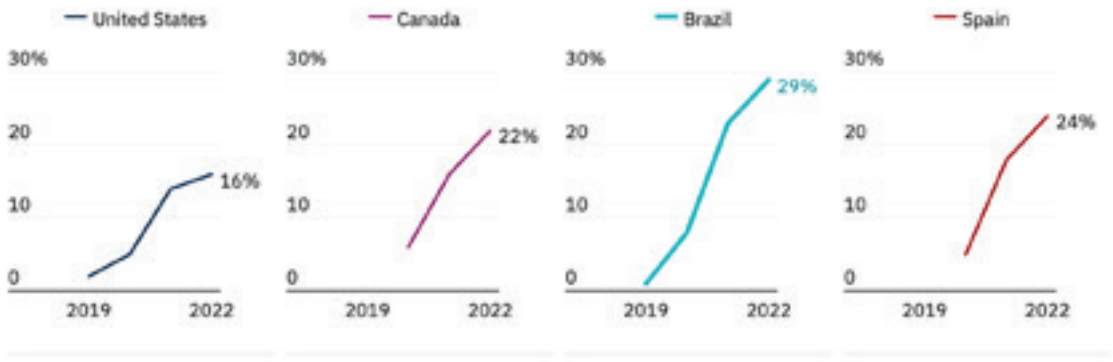
Hearst Magazines, MLS, NBCUniversal, UFC, Vox Media and WWE. eMarketer predicts that TikTok's ad revenues will reach $6.19 billion this year, so it's no wonder that publishers are eying up a slice of this pie.

Not everyone was enthusiastic about the potential of this new venture, however.

"Why, in 2023, do publishers still think pumping out their premium content for the benefit of the tech platforms is a good idea?" asked Jessica Lessin, the Founder of The Information. "The facts are clear. News outlets that believe they have to 'be where the people are' are just playing into the platforms' strategy of sucking up more premium content and paying publishers digital cents on the dollar. This is not a business model. It's insanity," she argued.

The emergence of TikTok as a major platform for news, especially among younger audiences – coupled with the influence it has had on other entertainment and information areas such as music and book publishing – is part of its appeal. As Jaden Amos, an audience editor at Axios, observes "We must meet audiences where they are and provide them with news in ways that are easy for them to understand — and today, that's on TikTok."

Figure 2. Growth in TikTok for any purpose 2019–2022, selected countries.



Source: Digital News Report 2022 (Survey Jan/Feb 2022). Q12a. Which, if any, of the following have you used in the last week for any purpose? Showing TikTok code. Base: Each market = 2,000. Data not available for 2019 in Spain and Canada.

Image taken from: How publishers are learning to create and distribute news on TikTok, via the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism

Image via Press Gazette

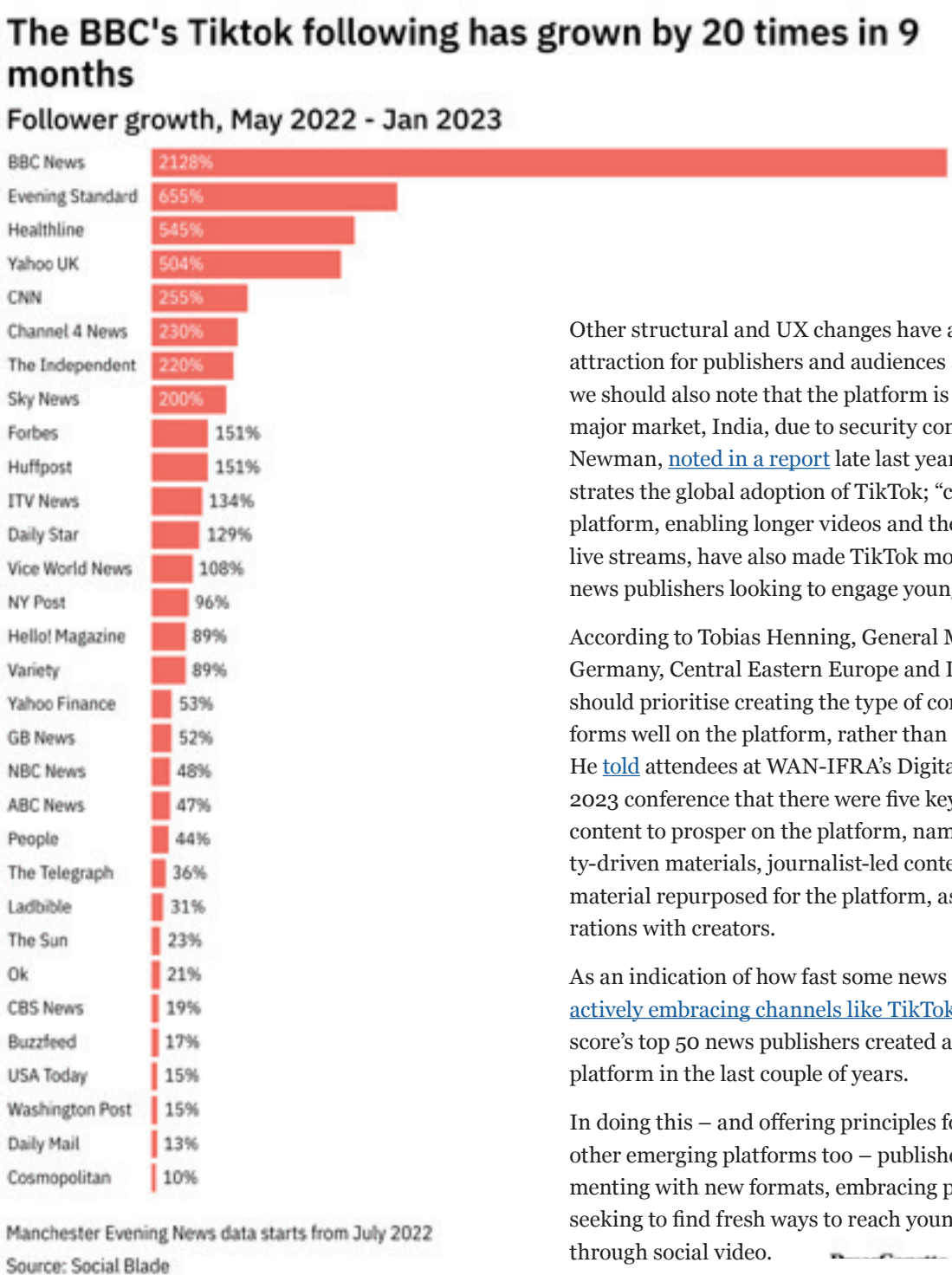


Image via Press Gazette

Other structural and UX changes have also increased its attraction for publishers and audiences alike (although we should also note that the platform is banned in one major market, India, due to security concerns). As Nic Newman, noted in a report late last year which demonstrates the global adoption of TikTok; "changes to the platform, enabling longer videos and the promotion of live streams, have also made TikTok more attractive for news publishers looking to engage younger audiences."

According to Tobias Henning, General Manager of TikTok Germany, Central Eastern Europe and Israel, publishers should prioritise creating the type of content that performs well on the platform, rather than chasing followers. He told attendees at WAN-IFRA's Digital Media Europe 2023 conference that there were five key ways for news content to prosper on the platform, namely: personality-driven materials, journalist-led content, explainers, material repurposed for the platform, as well as collaborations with creators.

As an indication of how fast some news organiations are actively embracing channels like TikTok, 39 of Comscore's top 50 news publishers created accounts on the platform in the last couple of years.

In doing this – and offering principles for engagement on other emerging platforms too – publishers are experimenting with new formats, embracing partnerships and seeking to find fresh ways to reach younger audiences through social video.

TikTok has therefore clearly emerged as a strategic priority for a number of outlets. But it's not the only one. YouTube continues to be the second most used platform for news globally, the latest Digital News Reports reports, suggesting more publishers should prioritise the platform. Meanwhile the emergence of newer networks like BlueSky, a doubling down on LinkedIn and the use of tools like Discord, are all part of a wider shift in publisher-platform dynamics, which we can expect to see accelerate further in the year ahead.

Chapter 3:

Revenues

This chapter offers an in-depth exploration of the financial aspects of our survey respondents, delving into their 2023-24 revenues and their forecasts for the upcoming year.

Advertising remains the leading source of income

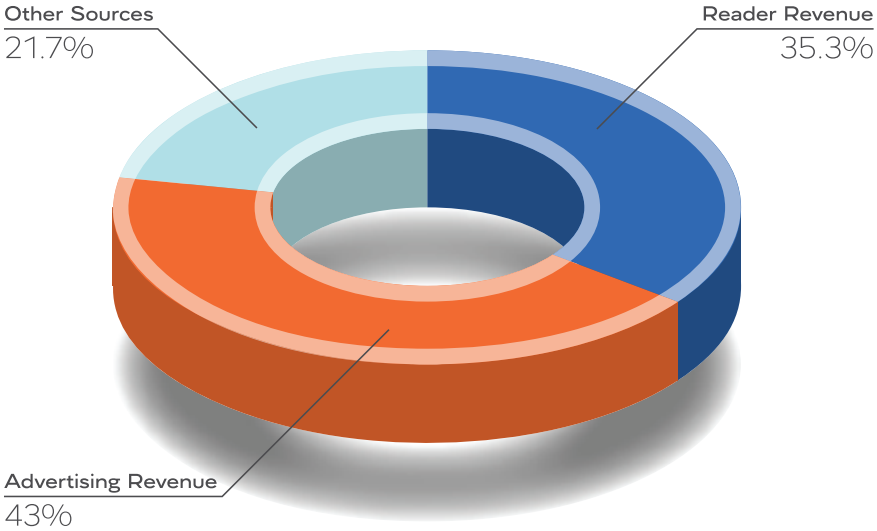
Although there remains a persistent drive among publishers to prioritise the growth of digital subscriptions and alternative forms of reader revenue, it is essential to recognise that advertising remains the primary source of income for many news outlets. Overall, among our respondents, advertising is expected to account for 43% of revenues over the next 12 months, rising to nearly half of publishers' income (45.6%) in developing economies.

Moreover, as digital subscriptions begin to level off, publishers are increasingly embracing the diversification of their business operations. They anticipate that more than 20% of their revenue will originate from sources beyond reader revenue and advertising in the coming year. That figure rises to over 30% in developing countries.

In Hong Kong, the largest TV broadcaster, TVB has had to contend with declining audiences and advertising revenues. "The company has posted losses for five consecutive years," the South China Morning Post reports, with a much-vaunted pivot to e-commerce struggling from a slowdown in post-pandemic purchases.

However, the company is confident that the introduction of live shopping which is very popular in mainland China – including a partnership with e-commerce platform Taobao – may turn this around. The company plans to host around 50 live-streaming events this year, the first of which generated 23.5 million yuan (US$3.37 million) in sales during a six-hour broadcast on Taobao Live.

Over the next 12 months, what percentage of your overall revenue will come from the following sources?



Source: WPT Outlook Survey 2023-24.

Global advertising spending is anticipated to exceed $1 trillion for the first time in 2024, the marketing research firm WARC predicted at the end of August. Almost a third (31.5%) of that spending will be in the USA. Worldwide, WARC envisages growth of 8.2% with James McDonald, director of Data, Intelligence and Forecasting at WARC suggesting that after a "bitter cocktail" of "high interest rates, spiraling inflation, military conflict and natural disasters... the ad market has withstood this turbulence and has now turned a corner."

However, with over half of global advertising spend this year going to five major tech firms – Alibaba, Alphabet, Amazon, ByteDance (owner of TikTok and Douyin) and Meta– publishers are not necessarily benefitting from this advertising renaissance.

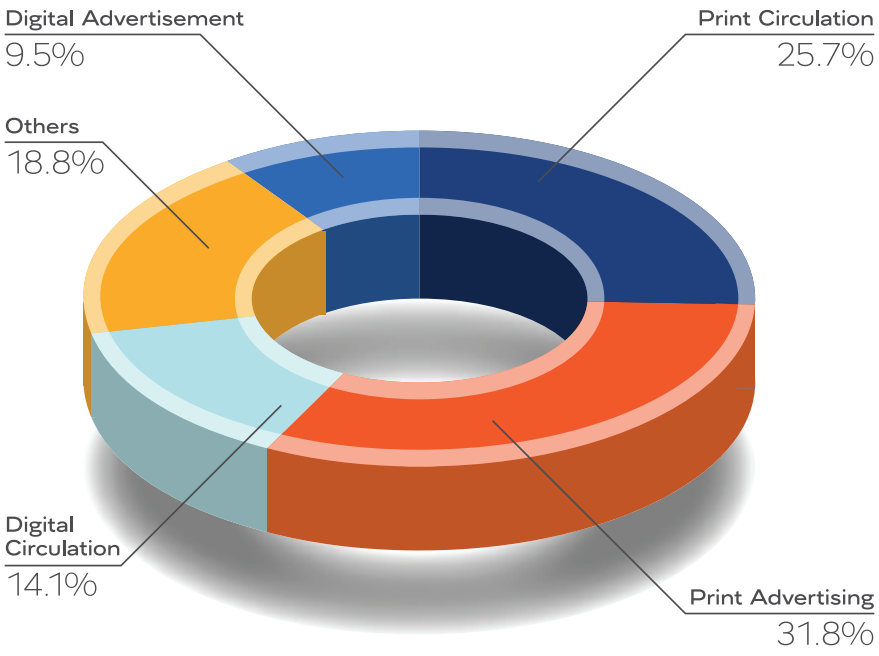


Image: Screenshots from TVB's first live commerce show on Taobao Live, via Marketing Interactive

Print revenues continue to prevail

In the grand scheme of things, print revenues – advertising and circulation - still make up over half of the total income, standing at 57.5% when asked about the current situation. Surprisingly, this is even higher (although marginally at just +2%) than the previous year.

What percentage of your total revenue comes from the following sources?



Source: WPT Outlook Survey 2023-24.

Against this backdrop, some publishers continue to make print plays. In France, the launch of La Tribune Dimanche in October 2023, represented the introduction of the first new nationwide print newspaper in a decade. The publication is divided into two parts – the first covering world news and the second culture and trends. As part of its strategy, the publication held listening events at cafés in major cities across the country, and they're also partnering with other organisations on events discussing key ideas such as the impact of AI and efforts to reduce carbon emissions and achieve net zero.

On a smaller scale, The Student, a free newspaper founded in 1887 by the novelist Robert Louis Stevenson, faced closure after the University of Edinburgh's student association withdrew its advertising. The oldest student newspaper in Europe, they successfully crowdfunded nearly £6,000 via a GoFundMe campaign. The Student still publishes in print every two weeks during term time. "As a community publication having a presence in print, on counters, in newsstands, across all the student parts of Edinburgh – without that visibility we might not be able to survive as a digital publication," said editor-in-chief Joe Sullivan.

This type of support model is one that other outlets are exploring too. The New European, which launched in 2016 after the UK's Brexit vote, raised an additional £1 million in funding last year via a co-ownership initiative, where equity in the business was offered. Originally targeting £500,000, the weekly paper's campaign exceeded expectations, with 2,200 new donors pledging to become co-owners, resulting in double the intended amount.



Image via Facebook

Digital not necessarily delivering a reliable revenue alternative

Although there has been a slight increase in digital circulation revenues (+2%), digital advertising has experienced an 11% decline, our survey respondents told us. That may seem surprising given that wider industry projections from earlier in the year suggested that digital ad spending would grow by 9.5% in 2023.

It would appear that this growth is not going to publishers – or at least those who responded to our survey – with tech platforms perhaps the most likely to benefit from these increases. In the United States, the world's largest advertising market, digital platforms – a label that encompasses search, social, commerce, retail media and digital video platforms – will account for about 64% of all advertising in 2023, according to a report from Madison and Wall. That's pretty much in line with global figures. According to GroupM, it is anticipated that in 2023, digital advertising revenue will make up 68.8% of the total global ad revenue.

Given this income potential, and despite the apparent challenge of attracting greater digital revenues, it's no surprise that news outlets continue to explore fresh ways to expand their digital footprint and associated revenues.

In September 2023, The Guardian launched a digital Europe edition, expanding its presence across the continent to provide a "European lens on world issues." This

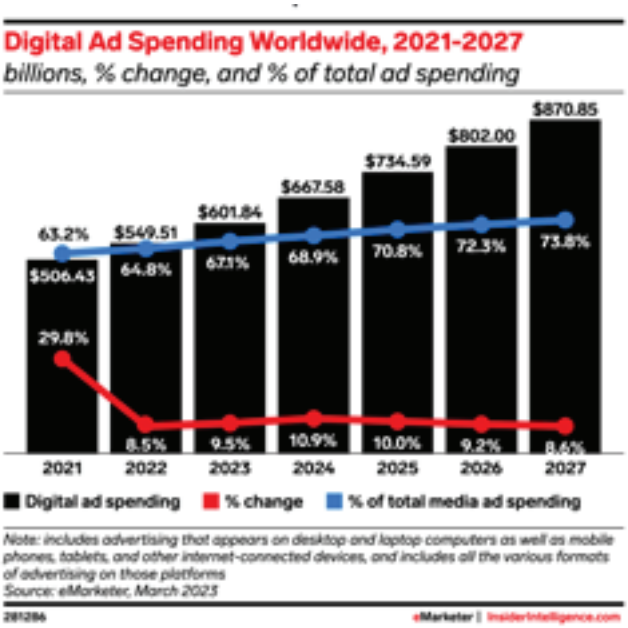


Image via Insider Intelligence

marks the fifth digital edition of The Guardian, complementing its existing UK, US, Australia and international versions. The new European edition will feature a dedicated Europe live blog and special editions of The Guardian's Today in Focus, Politics Weekly, and Football Weekly podcasts. The US version of the Guardian currently reaches over 40 million unique users a month, with Guardian Australia attracting more than 11 million monthly unique users.

Meanwhile, in Sweden, the publisher NWT has shown that local news can be made appealing to both older and

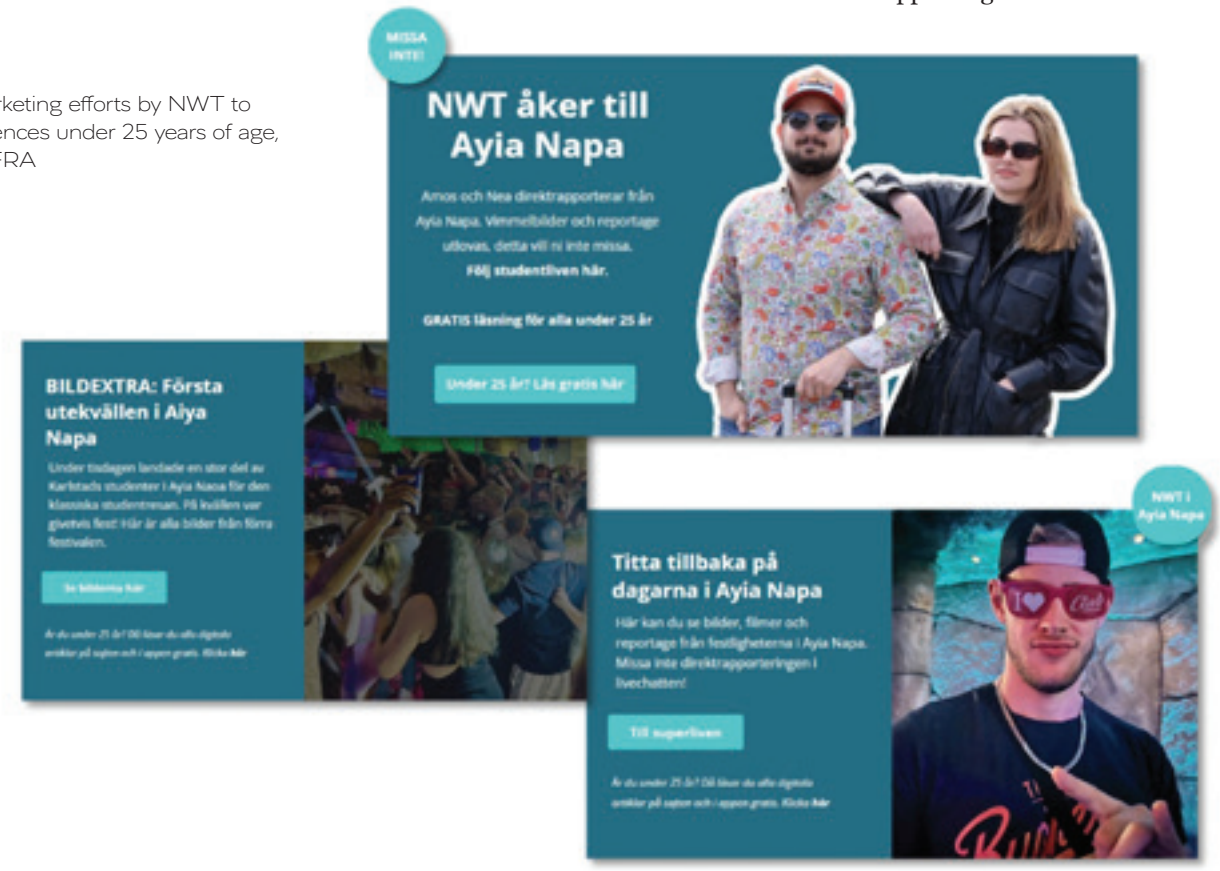


Image: Marketing efforts by NWT to reach audiences under 25 years of age, via WAN-IFRA

younger audiences. It also demonstrates that some publishers are witnessing digital growth. Digital revenues have increased substantially, growing 65% compared to 2020 Patric Hamsch, Deputy Head of Media at Sweden's NWT Media told participants at WAN-IFRA's recent World News Media Congress in Taipei.

The need for NTW to grow its digital income is demonstrated by the fact that reader revenue accounts for c.70% of its total revenue. Meanwhile, the average age of their print reader is 71 years old, making the need to attract younger audiences and digital revenues a clear strategic imperative.

As part of their engagement in Table Stakes Europe, a performance-driven change management initiative for local and regional news organisations, a WAN-IFRA programme supported by the Google News Initiative, their digital reach among 18- to 39-year-olds grew from 24.4% to 35.1% of their total online audience. This was attributable to several steps including learning more about younger audiences and purposefully creating more content for them on a range of channels. A number of those younger users have subsequently been converted into paying subscribers.

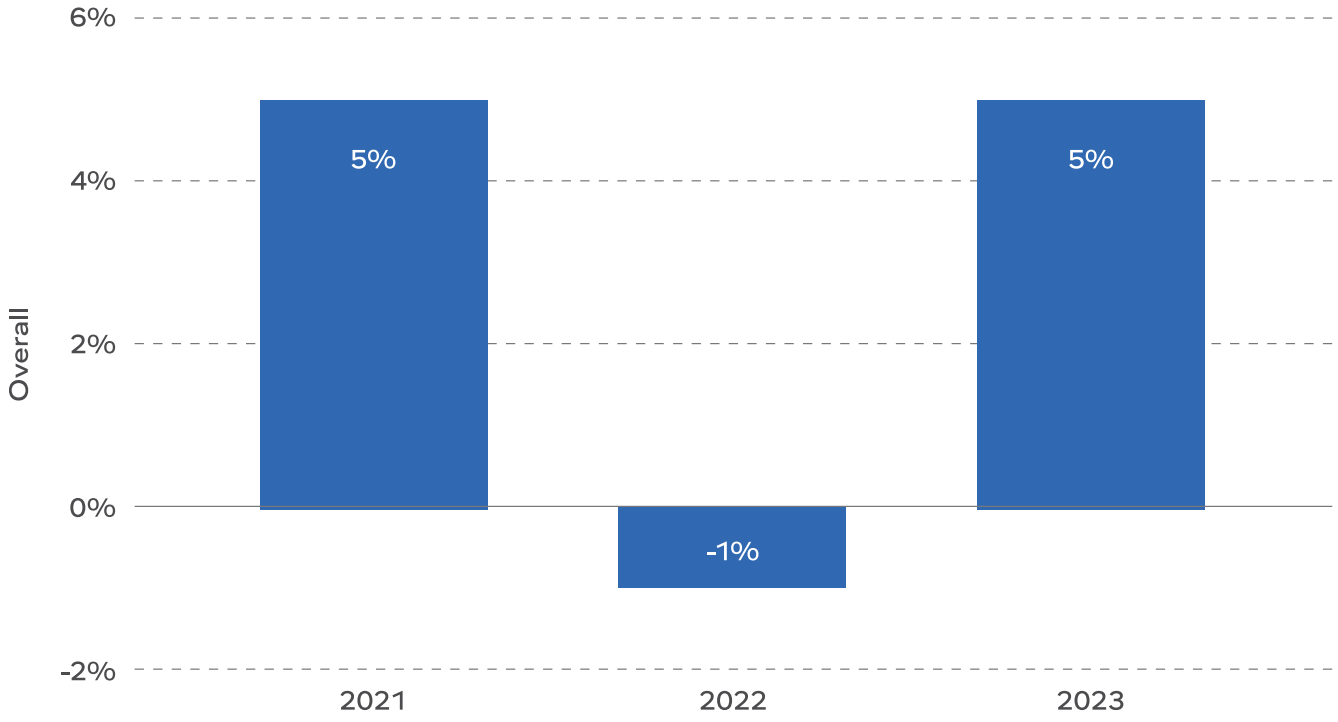
Profits holding steady

Despite the myriad of challenges that publishers face in 2023, the majority of publishers told us that their profits have shown improvement compared to the tough year of 2022. Of course, there are variances and certain groups are reporting lower results.

Screenshot 6th November 2023, via The Hindu



What is your company's overall profit change over the past 12 months?



Source: WPT Outlook Survey 2023-24.

While profit margins are unlikely to ever reach the heights enjoyed in the '80s and '90s, many publishers are optimistic about their current financial health and the potential for further growth.

To help them do this, one method that some publishers are once again actively embracing is bundling. Promoting packages to multiple titles, or verticals, is a way of potentially getting an individual subscriber to pay more (in return for more). In India, The Hindu offers potential subscribers access to a two-year all-access subscription for just 20% more than a one-year package. Like many other outlets, promotions are also often tied to key dates in the calendar, or news hooks such as Indian cricketer Virat Kohli equaling the record number of one-day international centuries for the country.

Retention lies at the heart of a lot of these strategies. As Pradeep Gairola, VP and Business Head – Digital, The Hindu told WAN-IFRA earlier in the year "Subscription is more of a retention business and less of an acquisition business. A leaky bucket hurts the organization." Citing research from Bain & Co, a recent report from Manifesto Growth Architects, Pugpig, IN Digital and Piano noted that increasing retention by 5% can increase profits from 25-95%.

In Europe, Mediahuis, has countered the slowdown in subscriptions and rising paper costs (up more than €30 million year-on-year) by continuing to focus on acquisitions and consolidating business processes across the group. The company, headquartered in Belgium, disclosed a net profit of €62.3 million for the year, a decrease from €117.3 million in 2021. However, operating profits fared slightly better, amounting to €155.7 million for the year, compared to €166.1 million in 2021, as turnover hit €1.2bn.

Acknowledging these trends, Brian Wieser the former Global President, Business Intelligence for GroupM, WPP's media investment Group, has argued that "publishers who continue to invest in their product – whether digital-only or print-digital hybrids – are much more likely to experience growth than those who do not." But, he notes, "profit margins are likely to be far below where they were in a world where content-less classified advertising provided support to the sector. For most publishers, emphasis on subscription or other revenue sources will likely be critical to longer-term growth opportunities."

Chapter 4

Moving Forward

As the media world evolves, publishers are continually seeking innovative approaches to sustain and grow their revenue streams. From ongoing shifts to develop reader revenues to emerging opportunities in the form of events and digital products, publisher revenues are in a perpetual state of transition.

Moreover, our survey also reinforces the fact that publishers have not turned their back on advertising. Far from it. Not only does this remain the single largest source of their income, but many outlets are also continuing to identify fresh ways to grow their advertising revenues.

Revenue diversification led by event strategies

As we have discovered, publishers worldwide are anticipating that approximately 20% of their revenues will originate from sources beyond the traditional reader revenue and advertising streams.

Within this, events remain the leading area of emphasis for publishers seeking to expand their revenue diversification efforts.

One major publisher, the Financial Times, hosts around 200 events a year. In a webinar hosted by the event software provider Bizzabo, Orson Francescone - managing director of the publication's events arm FT Live - shared how they attempt to grow their most successful events and scrap their least successful. "I love killing events. It's a very satisfying feeling," he said. "Sometimes, you get attached to an event, and in your heart, you know it's declining. I only like doing great things. Killing an event is one of the most satisfying experiences because deep down you know you did the right thing and can focus elsewhere."

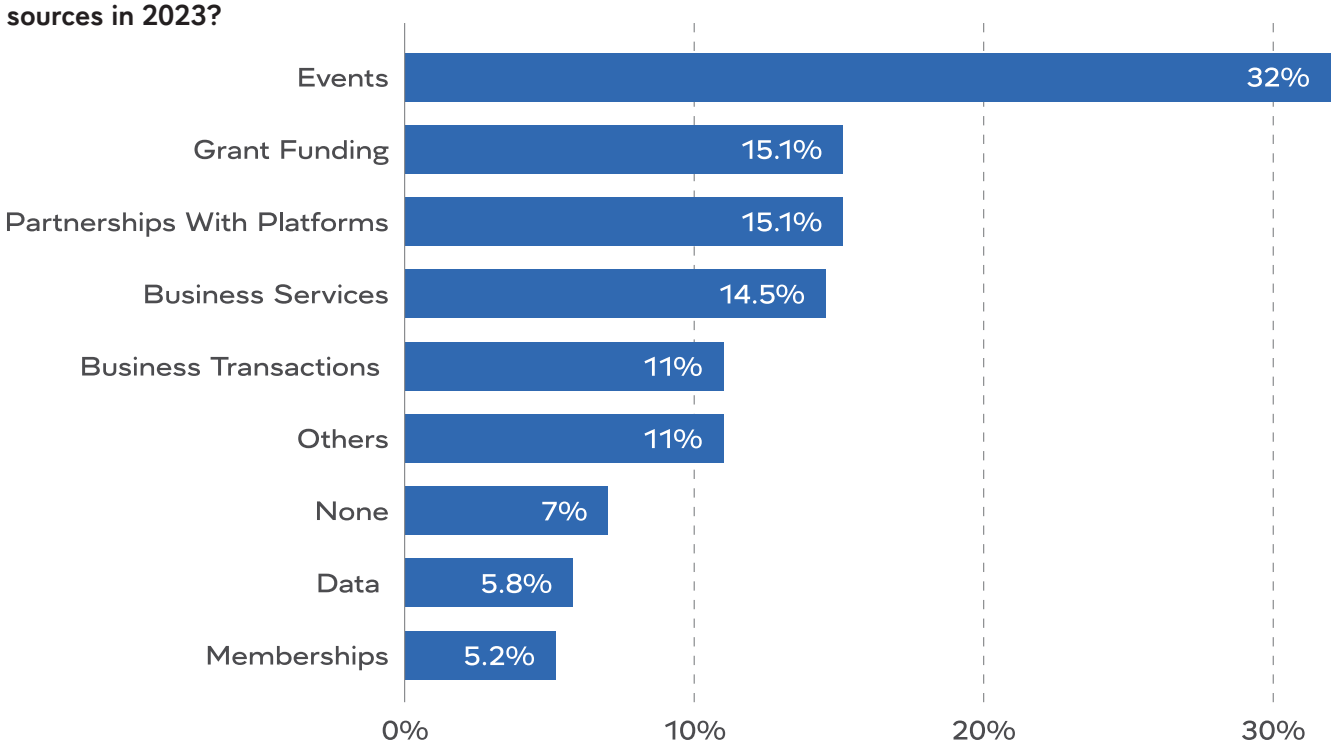
The FT is not alone in taking this approach. Recently The Guardian axed its Masterclasses programme, which offered "a range of practical, expert-led online workshops in journalism, creative writing, business skills and personal development." However, they continue to offer a range of other events, including discussions with writers and Guardian journalists.

Reflecting on the importance of event strategies, Shareen Pathak, Co-Founder, Toolkits, has argued that:

"Audiences don't want to be advertised to – they want to be entertained or educated – and ideally, both... Events are emerging as a powerful differentiator for brands, however, particularly if they're linked closely with companies' publishing and editorial approaches – and specifically, if they deliver on the same promise the company's editorial mission makes."

Events aside, many publishers are still banking on securing substantial revenue from platforms through special initiatives, compensation, and other agreements. This is on par with those identifying grant funding (which may, of course, come from these platforms) as the second most important area for revenue diversification beyond direct income from advertisers and readers.

Apart from advertising and reader revenue, which of the following are your most important revenue sources in 2023?



Source: WPT Outlook Survey 2023-24.

Growing reader revenue is a priority for almost everyone

In many parts of the world, growing reader revenue has become the primary strategy for publishers. Although advertising continues to dominate incomes, there's a long-standing recognition of the need to reduce ad-dependency.

Demonstrating how digital advertising alone is insufficient to derive large-scale profitability, DMGT – the home of MailOnline, one of the most visited websites in the world – last year reported operating profits of £52m. "Its slim operating margin of just 8% across its newspaper holdings is a reflection of its still heavy reliance on advertising," The Guardian noted.

As a result, when it comes to growing revenues, companies are typically looking to do this through growing reader revenue (83% of our sample), product development and R&D (81%) and other revenue streams (80%).

Some outlets are seeing success with this approach. Clarín, Argentina's largest newspaper, now has around 700,000 paying subscribers, with digital revenues worth more than print. In Germany, Süddeutsche Zeitung has increasingly incorporated links to their paid content in its newsletters. "This had led the German publisher to an average of 8% of overall paywall conversions coming from newsletters," reveals Madeleine White at The Audiencers, "an impressive figure that shows the value of this medium for subscriber acquisition."

Meanwhile, this shift towards reader revenue has, in turn, led to increased investments in interdependent areas like product development and marketing.

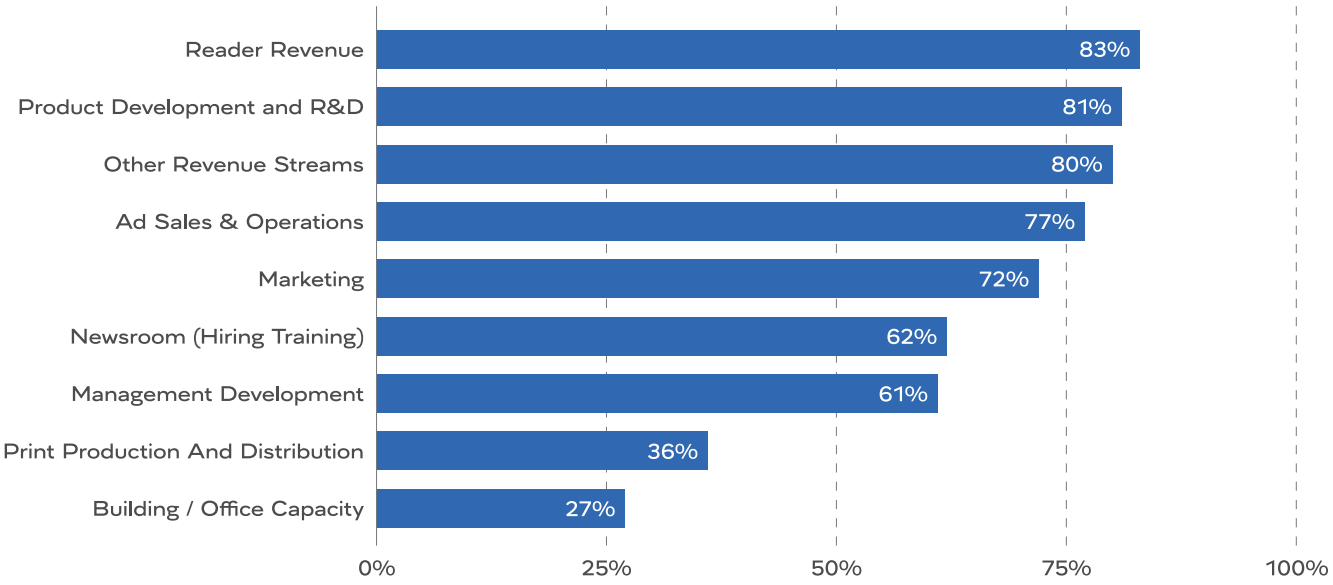
The Economist recently decided to put most of its podcasts behind a paywall, accessible only to subscribers of The Economist and the newly launched Economist Podcasts+. Going live in mid-October, a standalone subscription to the new service costs $/£4.90 per month or $/£49 per year (existing full subscribers can access this at no extra cost).

In the same month, The New York Times Company and PressReader unveiled a new partnership aimed at broadening The New York Times's global reach through a collaboration, spanning over 150 countries. Under this arrangement, PressReader has become the exclusive distributor of The New York Times Company's digital news products and digital replica editions to various entities, including hotels, airlines, cruise and ferry lines, as well as non-U.S. public libraries.

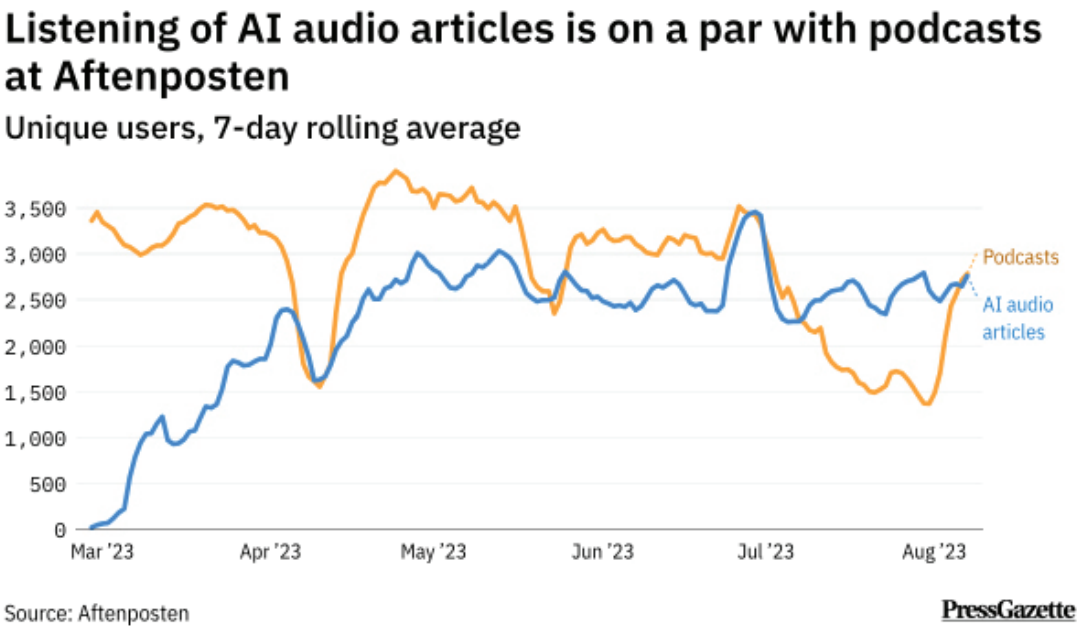
However, in comparison to the previous year, it is evident that there is also a greater focus on investment in ad sales. This demonstrates that the advertising industry is still vibrant and viable, and that publishers recognize that they should not just be managing a slow decline in ad revenues, but rather looking at ways to refresh and reinvigorate their advertising offerings.

They do this against a challenging backdrop, including growing competition for channels such as retail media and connected TVs (CTV). FAST channels, free TV-like

What are the priority areas for your company to invest in the next 12 months?



Source: WPT Outlook Survey 2023-24.



services on connected TV with scheduled commercial breaks built into their programming, are a growing source of revenue for some news outlets, with The Washington Post and Time among those to have joined this space in the past year.

In Brazil, the media conglomerate Globo – which operates numerous TV, radio, online and print outlets – launched its own digital marketplace, GAMA, selling programmatic advertising spots across its portfolio and those of other media and entertainment companies.

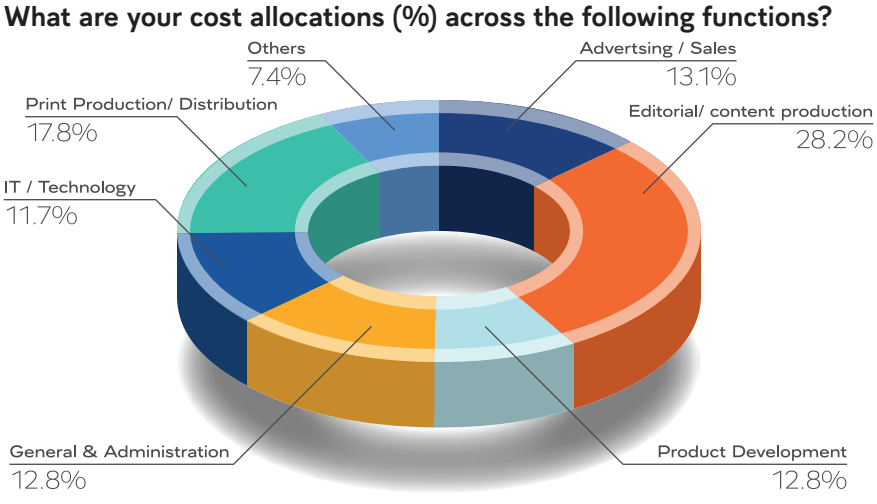
Where publishers spend their money

Although it appears that newsroom hiring has slowed down, personnel remain a substantial portion of a publisher's expenditures, with far-reaching implications for product development and IT/tech/data teams, areas of growing importance for many outlets.

Writing for The Fix, David Tvrdon points to a trend of "turning newsletters into podcasts and podcasts into newsletters." It's a move driven by a desire to increase "habit-building touchpoints," the holy grail of subscription strategies.

Similarly, investment in text articles read by an AI voice is also paying dividends for some players. Aftenposten, Norway's biggest daily newspaper, launched AI-generated audio articles earlier in the year. Within six months, these were enjoying as many unique users in an average week as the paper's podcasts, data shared with Press Gazette reveals.

At the same time, as publishers embrace a digital-focused business model, the significant cost structure that was once associated with print is gradually diminishing. This shift reflects the ongoing transformation of the publishing industry in response to the changing media landscape.



Source: WPT Outlook Survey 2023-24.

A message from our Report Partner: Stibo DX

Tech's role in FUNKE's ongoing transformation



About five years ago, FUNKE Media Group in Germany embarked on its stated transformation journey. One crucial aspect of that has been rethinking its corporate IT structure and department, even renaming it to FUNKE Technology. In addition to his role as Deputy Chief Innovation Officer for the media group, Heimo Krum is the head of transformation for FUNKE Technology. Here he shares how FUNKE's tech is driving much of its innovation – and transformation.

How would you characterise the role of technology in FUNKE's transformation journey?

When we began our transformation journey almost five years ago, we took the early step of renaming the former "Corporate IT" department to "FUNKE Technology" as part of our newly defined IT strategy and added the claim "because Technology is the driver of change". I think this still describes the core of our role very well to the point.

Technology has been the – most underrated – success factor in the big success and rise of the media industry after WWII. It led to a prospering and growing media company through generating and defending high market entrance barriers by having and maintaining big printing facilities and complex, highly optimised logistic structures and processes. That is changing because digitalisation leads to lower market entrance barriers – there is no need for printing plants, logistic infrastructures, or complex editorial systems anymore to become a news publisher. The result is more competition and lower contribution margins.

Digitalisation is a technology-driven development. When technology is part of the problem/challenge, it can also be part of the solution. And that is, what we have been good at in the past and our mission is to be good at it in the future to adapt to "new" market mechanisms and technologies faster than others.

FUNKE focuses on three business areas: regional media, magazines and digital. The group publishes 12 regional newspapers in Germany, with 1700 journalists and 3800 media professionals backing that effort.

Where does FUNKE stand on having a common tech stack/platform for all titles to work on?

I am pleased that we recognised the need for consolidated and harmonised systems and platforms as early as the takeover of the then Axel Springer titles (in 2014) and began to take the necessary but still difficult first steps towards a standardised and more central platform strategy.

But the truth is that it is not possible to renovate architecture of our size that has evolved over more than 30 years overnight. Especially when it comes to de facto organisational development projects, as is the case with departmental applications, where the first questions are about the right organisation, distribution of tasks and then processes, which I have to answer sufficiently in order to be able to implement a uniform system platform.

Regarding our infrastructure architecture, we actually benefited (in that specific perspective) from our cyber-attack in 2020 and the opportunity that arose out of it: to not rebuild the old unsecure architecture but start with a new one from scratch, defining our current infrastructure and security FUNKE Standard.

So we know that we need a common tech stack and platform strategy and have made a lot of progress. For example, all newspaper titles in the regional media already use the same editorial system, the identical subscription management platform and same ERP. We have already achieved this step in the standardisation process, so we are currently in the process of renewing and modernising our architecture and platform(s), which – as described above – we are driving forward on a modular basis and in line with the departmental processes, organisational development and requirements.

In WAN-IFRA's World Press Trends survey, CMS was listed as a key technology that publishers will invest in 2024... FUNKE re-cently implemented a new CMS platform. How has that gone so far, and how does such a project galvanise teams across the organisation?

I am happy and proud of our project team that has just this week (early December) successfully completed the rollout process of the CUE editor (from Stibo DX) throughout FUNKE regional media. As far as we know, this is the fastest or at least one of the fastest CUE rollout projects in the history of Stibo for a company of our size. To that success I see two key elements:

First, having brought the right team together. And this particular refers to our interdisciplinary project team, which is made up of members of IT as well as the editorial team (including the management and chief editors). This team has managed the project together with a common goal at eye level. The most important prerequisite for the team composition was the right mindset, making sure everybody really understands why we are implementing the CUE editor and then secondarily the professional expertise.

Second, in my opinion, one big mistake that is often made is the attempt to solve organisational and leadership problems with an IT system. This does not work. The real key to editorial (digital) transformation lies in the right leadership, qualifications and mindset of the editorial teams. The right tools can support this but cannot enforce the necessary change. We have therefore decided to manage and differentiate between two project strands in the project setup. 1) The system project with the task of implementing the right editorial editor for a digital-first editorial organisation, so focusing on the right functions, and 2) a project strand for editorial transformation, which deals with the necessary organisational development and effects and defining the right organisational environment. And of course these two strands had to work together very closely.

Already through the running project we saw an improvement in exchange across former “editorial” borders, locations and titles. Having just finished our CMS/Editor rollout, I expect this is a good start and not the end of transitioning into a better organisation and galvanization of teams.

AI is becoming relevant in all aspects of news: Story discovery, research, creation, production, and distribution. But AI is not one technology. How does Funke plan to make sure use of AI is managed and tracked so journalistic integrity and regulatory compliance is under control?

We still believe that the best use and benefit for us lies in the assistance functions of AI applications. It is important to us that our journalists are and remain responsible. AI processes should therefore start with a human being and end with a human being to assure the quality of our work. Already, AI technology can be a good and fast assistant and make tasks easier for us, be it summaries, semantic markups or alternative suggestions for headlines, teasers, etc. Some already use it for the automatic generation of content guided by journalists. And the AI models and use cases evolve quickly and we are curious about what we will see here in the future.

In order to ensure and manage the correct adoption and use of AI, we have set up a kind of hub and spoke organisation. Somewhat comparable to the innovation approach I mentioned before. The Hub is a central board made up of members from our divisions (Regional Media, Magazines, Funke Digital and the Center of Excellence). This is where the threads come together and decisions are made about central guidelines and mechanisms. The spokes are individual areas or units in the divisions, such as the editorial team for regional media. They ensure that we also have and adhere to journalistic guidelines for the use of AI and test AI use cases for their own areas of responsibility.

But beside the acceleration and advantages AI brings as an opportunity, we also have a very sensitive eye on the threats that come along. Already AI is used for the accelerated creation of fake news in increasing “quality”. Here we also see the increasing challenge of deciding what is true when speech, images or videos can already be artificially created in deceptive quality with comparatively little effort. That is something we worry about.

Stibo DX

Chapter 5

The year of AI

In this chapter, we thoroughly analyze how publishers use – and feel – about AI, arguably the biggest trend in media and technology right now.

AI and data are the top areas for tech investments

It's easy to forget that ChatGPT was only released to the public at the end of November 2022, triggering a surge in interest in the potential (and pitfalls) of Generative AI. Consequently, discussions about AI have become a focal point, dominating industry conferences and conversations.

As a result, it's not particularly surprising that AI is recognized by respondents to our World Press Trends survey as a leading investment priority. Nearly nine in 10 respondents (87%) identified AI as a priority for their company to invest in over the coming year. This was closely followed (86%) by Data Analytics and Intelligence (many of which are powered by AI technologies) with multimedia formats such as video (79%) and audio/podcasts (74%).

While many media companies have been using Artificial Intelligence for some time, the rapid evolution of this technology has only heightened interest in the potential that AI can unlock. Results from an earlier survey of newsrooms, published by WAN-IFRA at the end of May 2023, found that nearly half of newsrooms were already using Generative AI, although only one in five outlets (20%) at that point had guidelines in place for its use.

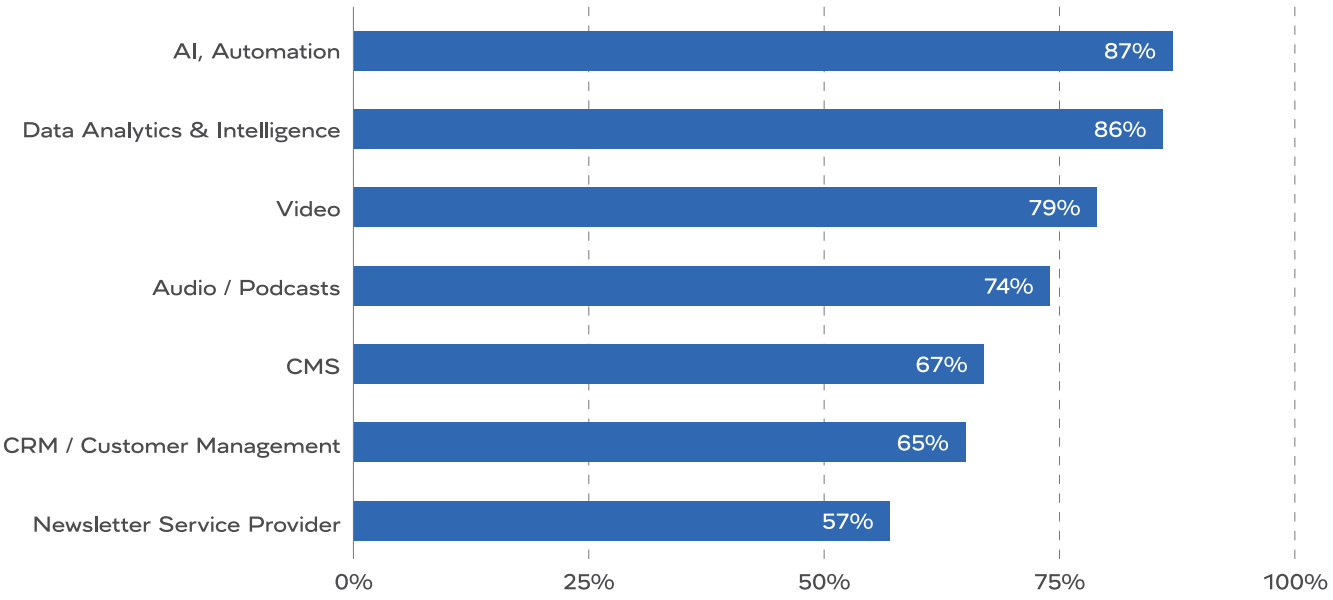
Alongside the focus on AI, when it comes to investments, Content Management Systems (CMS) and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems are also assuming even greater significance. This is being driven by an ever-closer alignment between editorial and commercial functions in many companies, particularly in the context of aligning audience management, engagement, and reader revenue strategies.

However, this focus can take many forms. One major US publisher, Vox, decided at the end of 2022 that it would no longer license Chorus, the content management system it introduced in 2008 and made available to others (for a fee) in 2018. In the summer of 2023, Vox decided to stop using Chorus on its own sites too.

This is part of a wider shift seen at a number of publishers to focus their investments on CMS technologies produced by others, rather than trying to develop their own. Indeed, ongoing development and maintenance proves challenging for even larger publishing groups, as today they tend to partner with proven providers for long-term support.

But AI's impact on publishers' workflows and business puts it in a category of its own.

What are the priority technologies/products for your company to invest in over the next 12 months?



Source: WPT Outlook Survey 2023-24.

You could argue that when we constructed our survey in the summer, we could have included AI in the question of investment areas and not just technologies. But with such a disruptive technology, there always seems to be a double-edged sword. And especially with Generative AI, that is indeed the case.

AI paralysis may have struck (or "wait and see" is in play)

Over half of our survey participants (54%) report that they are not currently utilizing ChatGPT or other GAI tools (survey conducted in late summer). This broadly aligns with our findings – from a slightly smaller sample – five to six months ago. At that point 51% told us they were not using these tools, compared to 49% who were.

This apparent flatlining of GAI adoption is perhaps surprising given that new use cases for AI tools by publishers are emerging on an almost daily basis. However, this masks some regional variances. Among survey respondents in developed markets, just over half (52%) said their company was actively using GAI. That drops to just under four in 10 (39%) in developing markets.

Given the noise being made about AI globally, these findings may be unexpected. Even in developed markets, adoption is only just over half, based on the insights provided by our survey participants. Yet, other research also seems to reinforce our conclusions.

The findings from a recent global survey conducted by LSE appear to tell a similar story. Looking at AI more generally, and not just Generative AI, their survey revealed that, while 80% of respondents anticipate a rise in the adoption of AI in their newsrooms, a substantial four out of 10 companies have not significantly altered their AI approach since 2019, the last time LSE undertook a similar assessment of AI adoption.

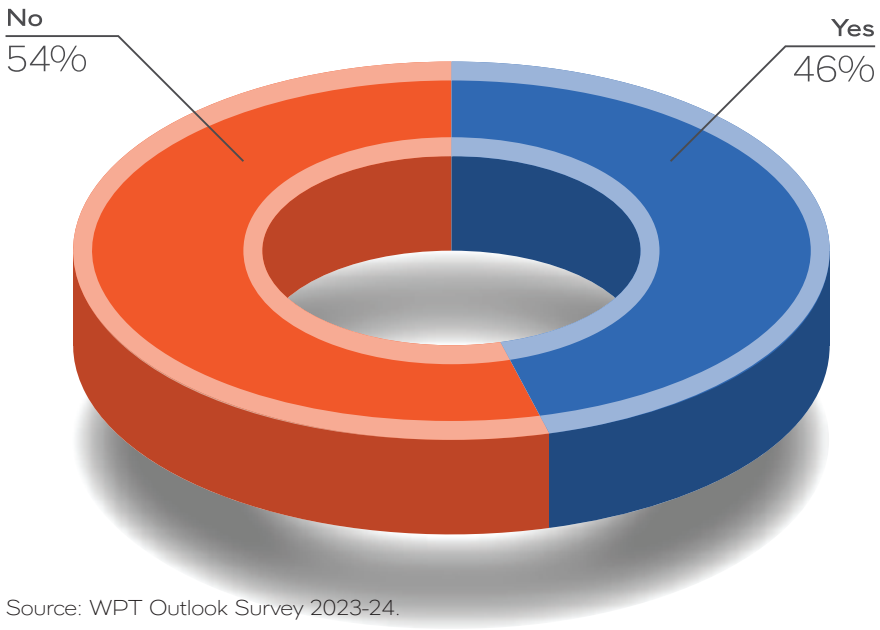
Hesitancy among publishers likely stems from issues related to accuracy, plagiarism and copyright infringement, areas that emerged as key concerns in our previous research. Our earlier survey revealed that these were the primary concerns among publishers when it came to AI-generated content. An overwhelming 85% of those survey respondents specifically cited inaccuracy of information and quality of content as a major issue associated with AI-generated content. Those misgivings have not gone away, perhaps reinforced by high-profile AI "fails" by outlets such as CNet and MSN.

Alongside this, questions about impending or evolving regulatory frameworks, as well as an inclination to adopt a cautious, wait-and-see stance, are all likely to play a role in publishers' attitudes.

Furthermore, part of the reason for this technological tentativeness might also be attributed to the number of "false prophets" that publishers have seen in recent years. From the metaverse to VR and AR, the pivot to video and discussions about the potential for tools like blockchain and smartwatches, the media landscape is full of technologies that failed to live up to the hype.

Aimee Rinehart, Senior Product Manager of AI Strategy at AP reflecting on the experience of smaller and

Is your company actively working with Generative AI tools like ChatGPT?



Source: WPT Outlook Survey 2023-24.

local newsrooms, explained how "they've adopted other technologies that get bought and sold, changed, buried... everybody gets trained on and becomes dependent on them, and then they go away."

Friend or foe?

Is AI a strategic threat to news publishers or an opportunity? Interestingly, our survey data seems to suggest that respondents see it as both of the things.

Certainly, the majority of publishers recognize that GAI is a potential threat to their business. Collectively more than three-quarters of our sample (79%) indicated that they were either "somewhat concerned" (59%) or "very concerned" (20%) about the threat of AI to their business.

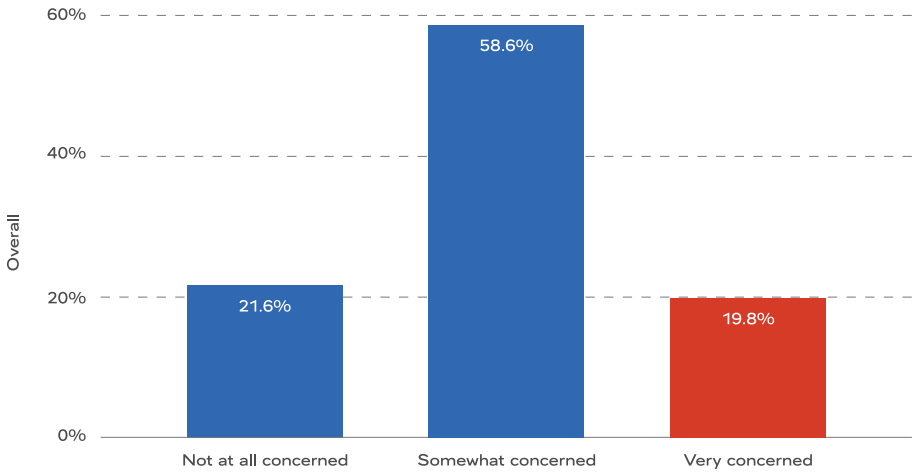
There are a number of factors driving concerns about the threat posed by AI. These include copyright and IP concerns, including remuneration or compensation from tech companies using media companies' content to train AI tools and platforms.

As Hamilton Nolan, a labor journalist who writes regularly for In These Times magazine and The Guardian, recently told Columbia Journalism Review:

"The smart move is for journalists—and authors and artists and media companies more broadly—to try to enforce their copyright claims to the absolute max right now. That is a piece of leverage over the AI companies that is going to disappear if we don't use it. Right now, the legitimacy of their practice of scraping all this creative output with no permission or compensation still seems like an open question, legally and otherwise. But the more time goes by, the more normalized the AI companies become, the more deeply they become embedded in daily use, and the harder it's going to be to turn back that clock in any meaningful way."

At the same time, Generative AI also introduces another source of content that can divert attention away from the publishers' own content and business models. Although tools like Google Bard and Bing Search include links to

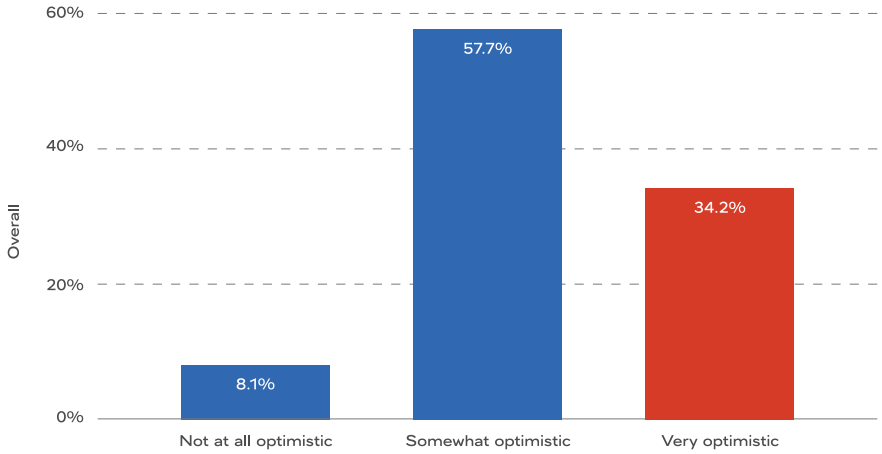
Considering the current state of Generative AI, how concerned are you that it will be a threat to your business?



	Overall	Developed	Developing	Variance
Not at all concerned	21.6%	16.1%	28.6%	12.5%
Somewhat concerned	58.6%	69.4%	44.9%	24.5%
Very concerned	19.8%	14.5%	26.5%	12%
Somewhat + very concerned	78.4%	83.9%	71.4%	12.5%

Source: WPT Outlook Survey 2023-24.

Considering the current state of Generative AI, how optimistic are you that Generative AI will represent opportunities to your business?



Source: WPT Outlook Survey 2023-24.

sources in the content that they generate, other platforms – such as the free version of ChatGPT – do not. Publishers therefore do not get attribution, or potential click-throughs, from responses built on their data and content.

The presence of 'hallucinations' (content made up by an AI), alongside concerns about the potential for misinformation and inaccuracies generated by AI systems, are a further threat to publishers, especially if Generative AI is being used for content and it is published unchecked, or errors are not picked up. Such situations risk undermining trust in news outlets, for whom ensuring content accuracy and quality remains paramount.

In fact, OpenAI's ChatGPT crawler (that can scrape content and data from sites to train their model) has been blocked by a number of companies, including The New York Times. And the Times, as well as others, took an even further step by suing OpenAI and Microsoft for copyright infringement.

On the other side, a number of publishers have struck multi-year deals with AI companies in the past year to try to perhaps circumvent these issues. Publishers like Axel Springer — the parent company of Bild, Die Welt, Politico and Business Insider — and The Associated Press have signed deals with OpenAI to license stories to train models like GPT-4 and develop technology for news gathering. And Apple and Google are reportedly in discussions with publishers for similar deals.

AI's potential

However, our survey respondents also indicated that – despite their misgivings – they can also see the long-term potential of these technologies.

Fewer than one in 10 respondents (8%) said they were "not at all optimistic" about the potential of Generative AI for their business. Levels of both optimism and pessimism were broadly aligned in both developed and developing markets.

Driving this optimism are well-worn arguments about the potential of Generative AI to enhance business operations through efficiencies in workflow, reducing costs through automation and also helping to automate some products and content, potentially freeing up personnel to work on other areas, as well as enabling certain types of content to be produced more quickly.

AI readiness

Despite high levels of optimism about the opportunities that Generative AI potentially affords, the majority of our survey participants acknowledge that they are not fully prepared to tap into this in the coming year.

This lack of readiness can be credited to a number of factors including publisher know-how, the pace and speed of adoption, and the bandwidth to experiment with a technology that is not yet a year old. Many publishers may feel they lack the knowledge and understanding needed to fully leverage Generative AI, and the speed with which this technology is evolving may make it even more overwhelming.



Image via Yle. In 2018, the Finnish Broadcasting Company shared the code being used to power its Voitto bot, which at the time was used to produce reports of ice hockey matches.

Similarly, although experimenting with new AI technologies and applications is likely to be crucial for success, finding the capacity for experimentation and innovation can be difficult.

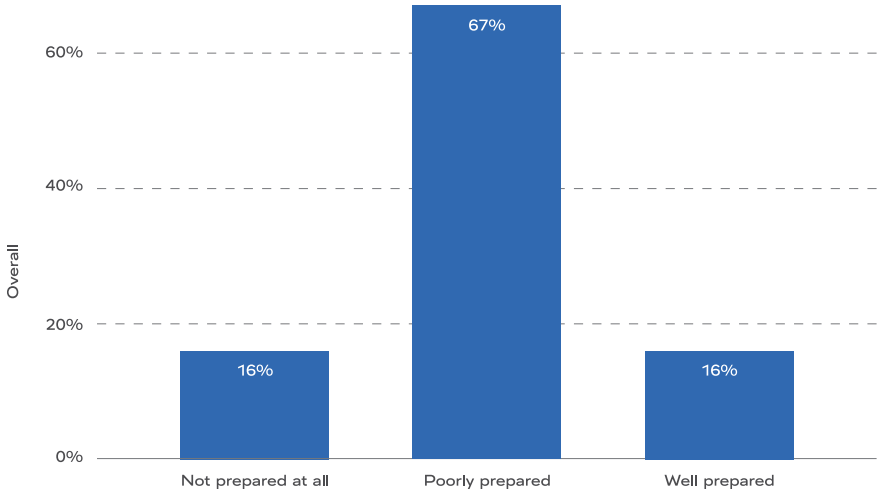
Compounding this is the impact that the deployment of Generative AI might have on organizational culture, structures and workflow. Resistance and nervousness about the adoption of this technology – and its implications – have encouraged unions and others to seek clarification about the impact of this on labor. As Jarkko Ryynänen, project manager for the Yle News Lab in Finland told Nieman Reports, "every time we introduce something.. the first or second question will be: Will this robot sack me?"

Part of their solution was to name the AI, calling it Voitto (which means victory in Finnish), and using a cartoon to represent it. "We made up this doll and this figure Voitto and somehow it worked,'" Ryynänen said. If "he's not so dangerous looking then there's nothing to be feared."

Other companies like TMB (Trusted Media Brands) have established internal task forces to understand the risks, as well as the benefits, that AI might unlock. Due to the breadth of business activities that may be impacted by AI, these internal bodies should be diverse and include people from across the company. These approaches also help with issues such as buy-in and roll-out, as well as identifying training and development needs. AI has the potential to impact all areas of a company, so efforts to explore adoption and deployment must involve people from different areas of the business.

Building off this, to help harness and maximise the potential of AI, publishers should have a clear strategy that outlines how the company will utilise these technologies. That also includes what it will not be used for.

In terms of skills and competencies, how prepared do you think your company will be to take advantage of GAI in the next 12 months?

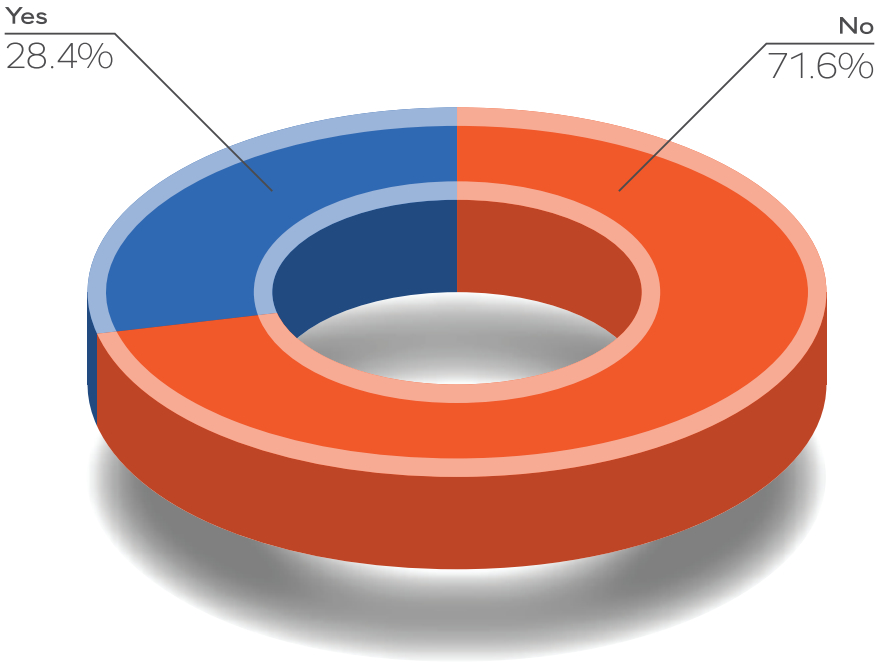


Source: WPT Outlook Survey 2023-24.

Wired, for example, clearly outlines that they will not publish stories with text generated or edited by AI and that they will not use AI-generated images instead of stock photography. On the other hand, they say that they "may try" using AI for story generation ideas, headlines, and text for social media posts. "We want to be on the front lines of new technology, but also to be ethical and appropriately circumspect," they note, acknowledging at the same time that "AI will develop and so may modify our perspective over time."

And there are a number of publishers that have taken a lead in establishing

Does your company have a clear framework for AI adoption and implementation?



Source: WPT Outlook Survey 2023-24.

dedicated resource, teams and infrastructure to develop roadmaps for use of AI. Schibsted announced last year that it was merging its Schibsted Futures Lab and the AI Enablement program to support all of Schibsted's use of AI technology. In the company's press release, it said "The AI Enablement Program runs the Schibsted AI Academy and supports teams with scaling up infrastructure and maintaining frameworks for AI use. The Futures Lab will maintain its focus on strategy, foresight and forecasting, educating on foresight processes, and reducing uncertainties in plausible futures through experimentation and research."

Yet our survey data shows that an overwhelming majority of companies (72%) do not have a clear framework for AI adoption and implementation.

Publishers need an AI roadmap for several key reasons, including identifying a clear strategic direction for the integration of AI technologies within their organization, alongside the goals and objectives they aim to achieve with AI. In turn, this strategy will also influence areas such as resource and budget allocation, project prioritization, risk management, hiring and personnel development as well as other factors.

In essence, an AI roadmap serves as a guiding document that ensures a structured and purposeful approach to AI adoption, helping publishers make the most of the opportunities and overcome the challenges associated with artificial intelligence. With just under half of our respondents (46%) saying they use Generative AI (never mind other forms of AI) but only just over a quarter (29%) tell us that they have a well-defined structure and strategy for the integration and deployment of AI in their company, there's a clear disconnect here.

Hopefully, our survey next year will show that this gap has narrowed. Many media companies have publicly shared their own efforts in this space, which can be valuable to learn from.

As Felix M. Simon of the Oxford Internet Institute notes in a helpful critique of these initial approaches, "the practices of the early proponents of AI guidelines in news can become a model for others, paving the way for better AI practices across the news industry." Looking at AI guidelines from 52 publishers in 12 countries around the world, Simon found that thus far, "Despite the diversity of countries and contexts, a surprising degree of uniformity exists between these guidelines – not so much in the way they are structured and formulated but in how news organisations have decided to regulate the technology and ensure that it is used ethically."

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World Association of News Publishers

Chapter 6:

Challenges to Press Freedom

In this concluding chapter, we assess the degree to which news publishers are grappling with threats to media freedom and outline the various manifestations of this challenge.



Image via CPJ

An increasingly bleak picture

As in previous years, our survey also probed respondents about various aspects concerning media freedom and freedom of expression. We posed these questions at a pivotal moment for our profession, as we observe the diminishing media freedom worldwide and the growing challenges that journalists encounter in carrying out their work.

These trends have been observable for an extended period; as evidenced in our annual study as well as work produced by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), Reporters Without Borders (RSF), Freedom House and many others.

"Journalists have long been under siege," notes Antonio Zappulla, the CEO of the Thomson Reuters Foundation (TRF) in a 2023 report on media freedom by TRF and the Tow Center for Digital Journalism at Columbia University. "The mission to inform and empower can be as dangerous as it is critical."

"For years, the deliberate targeting and silencing of journalists by those invested in controlling the free flow of information has been surging," Zappulla writes, adding that "in an era defined by converging global crises, journalists who hold power to account are increasingly making enemies of the powerful."

This is manifesting itself in multiple ways. CPJ reported – in its most recent annual census – that 363 journalists were known to be imprisoned as of December 1, 2022. Meanwhile, they recorded 68 media workers and journalists were killed in 2022, and a further 95 in 2023 at the time of writing. That figure will only rise as a result of continued conflicts around the world – including in the Israel-Gaza conflict. As of January 19, CPJ's preliminary investigations estimate at least 83 journalists and media workers have been among the more than 25,000 killed since the conflict began on October 7.

More widely, "in every corner of the world, freedom of the press is under attack," argued the UN Secretary-General António Guterres in remarks published on World Press Freedom Day 2023. "Truth is threatened by disinformation and hate speech seeking to blur the lines between fact and fiction, between science and conspiracy," he argued, pointing to media consolidation, the collapse of independent outlets and a growing number of laws and regulations "that stifle journalists" as being key contributors to "expanding censorship" and freedom of expression.

These elements have contributed to multiple reports, including the 2023 World Press Freedom Index, which have shown that increasingly publishers all over the world are facing daunting challenges regarding press freedom.

The annual World Press Freedom study, which assesses the journalistic environment in 180 countries and territories and is released on World Press Freedom Day (May 3), categorized the state of media freedom as "very serious" in 31 countries, "difficult" in 42, "problematic" in 55, and "good" or "satisfactory" in 52 countries.

In essence, this means that the environment for journalism is considered "poor" in seven out of ten countries and only "satisfactory" in three out of ten.

That aggregated figure shows little change over the past decade, but masks that the number of countries where

Level of media freedom	2013	2023
Very serious	20	31
Difficult	38	42
Problematic	69	55
Satisfactory	27	44
Good	26	8

Source: World Press Freedom Index

RSF reported media freedom to be "good" has dropped from 26 countries in 2013 to just 8 in 2023. By the same token, at the other end of the scale, the number of countries where the state of media freedom is defined by RSF as "very serious" has grown from 20 nations in 2013 to 31 by 2023.

Attacks on multiple fronts

Our data underscores the widespread and diverse nature of these press freedom challenges. While many of these issues seem to be more prominent in developing countries, they are by no means confined to a specific region or group of nations.

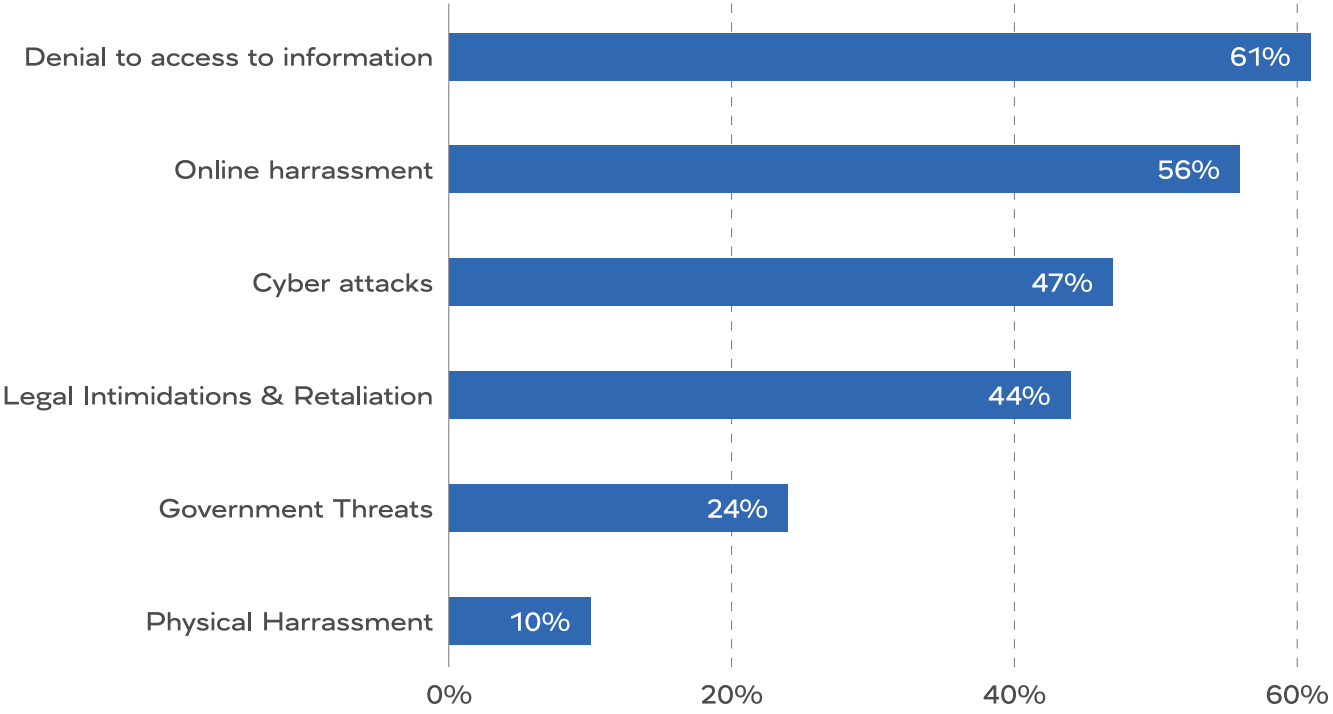
Across our overall sample, nearly two-thirds of respondents (61%) told us that their company had been denied access to information. More than half (56%) reported that they had endured online harassment. Meanwhile, nearly half said they had been the targets of cyber attacks (47%) and legal intimidations and retaliation (44%).

In Botswana, the offices of Mmegi, a leading newspaper were raided by intelligence services in late July. During the operation, law enforcement agents confiscated electronic devices and arrested editor Ryder Gabathuse, as well as a reporter Innocent Selatlhwa. The journalists were later released without charge, Voice of America reports, placing the incident in the context of recent attacks seen across the continent.

Such incidents are not confined to the developing world. In a widely reported case in the United States, this August police in Marion, Kansas, executed a raid on a local newspaper, confiscating computers, cell phones, and other materials from its office and the home of its owner and publisher.

"Thankfully, newsroom raids are rare and constitutionally suspect in the U.S.," the Daily Beast reflected, "But the alarming reality is that while newsroom raids may be rare in America, police surveillance of journalists is not," they wrote outlining a number of methods being used by the authorities to keep tabs on journalists. The U.S. Press Freedom Tracker features 94 total search and seizure

Has your organisation or its staff experienced any of the following?



Source: WPT Outlook Survey 2023-24.

incidents – similar to the one seen in Kansas - since the site began in 2017.

Underlining some of the key differences between regions, there are several areas where respondents to our sample in the developing world reported issues that are much more prominent in those nations than in developed economies. That includes government threats (41% vs. 7%), physical harassment (33% vs. 21%) as well as legal threats (59% vs. 32%) and denial of access to information (55% vs 29%).

Nevertheless, the fact that more than a quarter of respondents in the developed world indicated that they had had issues with access to information, and nearly a third have been privy to legal threats highlights that these are important issues for many journalists everywhere.

Within this, strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) are increasingly prevalent on a global scale, and they present a substantial threat to freedom of expression, media freedom, and various other human rights.

As Catherine Offord, a science journalist based in Spain, reminds us, there is often an absence of effective legislation to prevent these types of lawsuits from being used against the media. This can have consequences for the types of stories that outlets cover and the information that audiences can access. "While large outlets may have the backing and resources to face down these kinds of attacks, smaller outlets can more easily be persuaded to avoid covering controversial topics in the future," she suggests.

Other legal mechanisms – and government threats - that might be used include the blocking of visas and entry into a country, potential deportation, as well as calls by politicians for their supporters to boycott specific outlets.

Similarly, in many developing nations dependence on government monies – particularly advertising – can also impact media coverage.

Dounard Bondo, a Liberia-based journalist who covers politics, policy, law and entertainment reflects how "the fear of losing money from government advertising, which is the largest source of revenue for most media houses, also leads to self-censorship."

It's a view that others, such as George Ogola, Professor of Media Industries at the University of Nottingham in the UK agree with. "As economic challenges become existential threats to many media organisations, they have been forced to reduce their workforce, weakening gate-keeping processes," Ogola contended in an article for The Conversation. "The professional precarity of journalists afraid to lose their jobs has also made them susceptible to self-censorship and bribery."

Because of this, Bondo argues – sharing principles applicable in markets around the world - that "the press also has to figure out how to make money independent of government advertising." In an interview with Pass Blue, a nonprofit, independent women-led media company that covers foreign affairs and the United Nations, he also calls for greater salaries for journalists to help "foster press independence," as well as more training for journalists "on how to properly report on sensitive topics."

In addition to these differences, we also saw areas where we saw little variance in the experience of our respondents. This includes cyber-attacks (48% in developing countries and 43% in developed countries) and online harassment (43% vs. 39%), highlighting the near universality of these challenges.

"News outlets are frequently targeted by politically motivated actors who aim to disrupt or compromise the content and its distribution," commented Dan Vasile, VP of strategic development at BlueVoyant and former VP of info security at Paramount to Infosecurity Magazine, in a piece which highlighted the complexity of many media supply chains and its vulnerability compared to many other sectors such as banking or the petro-chemical industries.

Reinforcing why this matters

As our survey once more clearly demonstrates, journalists and media organizations face a multitude of methods aimed at curbing press freedom. These methods encompass digital attacks, physical intimidation, and threats originating from governments and the legal system.

The perpetrators of these actions have an array of tools at their disposal, and they are unapologetic in their use. In fact, evidence suggests that they have become emboldened to use them with increasing alacrity.

For example, in Algeria, Amnesty International says the authorities have taken legal action, arrested, or detained a minimum of 11 additional journalists and media professionals in the past two years, even though Algeria's constitution protects the rights to freedom of expression and freedom of the press. Many of these cases can potentially be traced back to criticism of the government, with charges of spreading "fake news" used as the rationale for these arrests.

It's a playbook also seen in other countries. In Russia, Maria Ponomarenko, a Siberian journalist and activist working for the RusNews outlet, was given a six-year prison sentence for disseminating what the authorities termed "fake news" concerning the war in Ukraine.

Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich is also currently detained in Russia on espionage charges. As the paper observes, Gershkovich is the first American journalist detained in Russia on such charges since the Cold War. "The Journal and the U.S. government vehemently deny the allegation against him and have called for his immediate release," they state on their website.

Meanwhile, The Washington Post has revealed how the Vietnam government endeavored to plant spyware on the phones of journalists from CNN, including Jim Sciutto, the outlet's chief national security analyst, and two Asia-based reporters, as well as members of Congress and American policy experts.

It is the collective responsibility of all of us to address these issues by exposing abuses and emphasizing the significance of journalists being able to carry out their work without harassment, threats, or fear.

As A.G. Sulzberger, Chairman and Publisher of The New York Times, told attendees at an event hosted by the United Nations this year to commemorate the 30th anniversary of World Press Freedom Day:

"For nations with a strong tradition of a free press, including the United States, this means leaders standing up to secure legal protections for independent reporters and their sources… For nations where reporting the truth remains perilous, this means the international community must make clear that we'll call out and punish the crackdowns and attacks against journalists no matter where they occur."

To help do this, Sulzberger stressed the imperative of tackling the challenges that confront the press, which includes the development of robust revenue models – and greater trust and financial support among audiences - to sustain independent journalism.

"We still need a commitment from the digital giants to elevate independent journalism and ensure it stands apart from untrustworthy information on their platforms," he said. "And we still need more of the public to value independent journalism enough to support it with their time, their money and their trust."

WAN-IFRA remains committed to these areas, helping news publishers become more sustainable, while at the same time defending and promoting media freedom globally through advocacy, media development, and journalism safety training. In addition, we will continue to shed light on media freedom issues in our annual World Press Trends report, as we strive to continue to shine a spotlight on the most important issues shaping the news media today.

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