

# Knowing Your Audience

■ The Secret to a Successful PR Strategy



# Contents



## CHAPTER 1

# Audience Fragmentation and How it Affects Your Comms Strategy

**Comms professionals used to have an advantage when it came to finding their audience. All we had to do was refer to our audiences' media consumption to learn about them.**

We knew where to look. In 2007, there were 191 programmes on TV that were capable of drawing an audience of over 10 million. In 2000, The Sun spoke to 3.5 million daily readers, the Daily Mirror to 2.2 million.

**Today, that landscape looks very different.**



Fewer households in the UK buy newspapers, and expenditure on print fell from £4.45 billion to under £2.8 billion in 2020. By 2017, there were 64 programmes capable of drawing a 10m+ audience. Tabloid circulations have fallen to 1.2m for The Sun and 451,000 for the Daily Mirror (2020 figures).

The good news for us is that these audiences haven't vanished. But they have been taken out of their neat, well-defined setups. Consumers don't scour through "their" newspaper while sipping coffee at their tables anymore; instead, they lap up information via different channels.

**The media landscape of old – and the media landscape that has been ingrained in the minds of many of us – was like a building, with each publication or media outlet representing a single room.**

Before, audiences tended to stick to their room; Guardian readers in one, Mirror readers in another, Financial Times readers in the next. And with a megaphone, we could address them collectively provided we knew where to look – and if there was a reasonable overlap between their audience and ours. But now, they're spread all over the building. Our megaphones aren't as effective if we keep doing things the old way – and yet, that's what many seasoned comms professionals are doing.

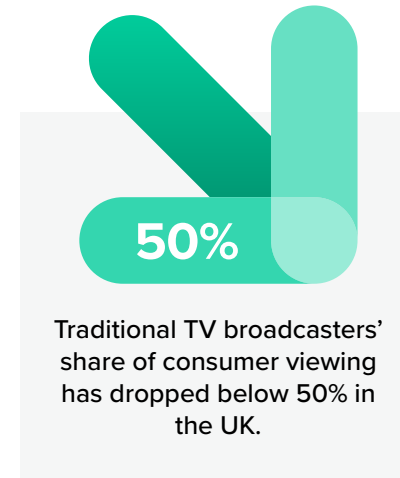
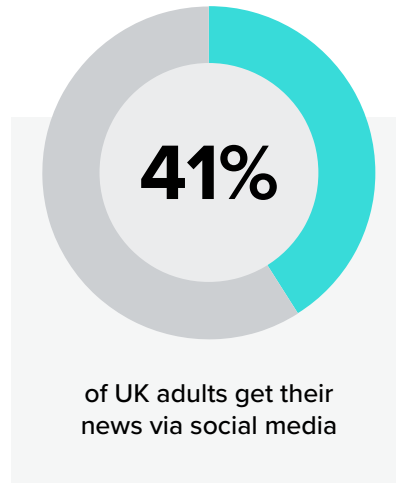
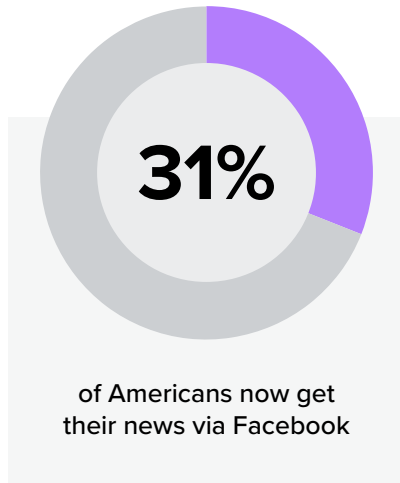
We no longer have a clear, easy, and direct route to connect with our audience as we did before.

**So how can we chart and navigate these new territories?**

**According to BBPG, we're witnessing "the disintegration of consumer audiences into smaller clusters".** Today's consumers are not assembling around the 6pm news bulletin or prime time soap opera. But they are self-segmenting instead into on-demand news and media options. So, many are using social platforms to absorb information published by traditional outlets. While the endpoint still remains the same, audiences' access points have shifted.



■ In fact, the average user bounces between seven social media platforms a month:



This is audience fragmentation in action. It's a challenge for comms teams who have been guilty of taking our access to consumers for granted. Once loyal, consistent audiences are now opting into the news on a click-by-click basis. It's becoming harder for us to see who we're talking to, measure the reaction, and plan for the future.

To some, this may spell the end of an effective audience analysis. It's definitely getting difficult to reach consumers when they're strewn across many platforms.

**But how true is this perception?**

# How has audience fragmentation influenced targeting?

The mechanics of audience engagement haven't changed. We still sell content to consumers and eyeballs to advertisers. We can still control who we attract and may even be getting bigger numbers than before.

But we also need to remember that the user has full autonomy at their fingertips. This makes it easier for them to switch between devices and platforms in a matter of minutes. Also, sub-clusters and segments of users are emerging at a rapid pace.

**Unfortunately, the issue runs even deeper than that.**

Segmentation isn't new to marketing and comms strategies. It has always been a key aspect of them. What has changed though is how brands are finding these segments. Audiences are more dispersed now than ever before. They also shift between platforms far more than before. This gives us an unclear, disjointed view of their audience. With both missing and ever-changing pieces of the puzzle, it's very difficult to get a clear picture.



# Is knowing where your audience lives enough?

The truth of the matter is pretty straightforward: placement only tells some of the story. A user's presence on a particular platform hardly reflects anything of value anymore. **After all, “where” doesn’t equate to “who” as it did before.**

Moving from the “where” to the “who” comes with its own set of hurdles. For brands, it's all about cutting through the clutter and reaching out to the right crowds.

In the present landscape, we often find ourselves at sea. We feel stranded amidst endless waves of likes, shares, comments, news pieces, opinion polls, and much, much more. What makes matters worse is that we have no maps guiding us to our desired destination. And without arriving at our destination, it's impossible for us to learn anything about its inhabitants.

**So how can we resolve this?** It all comes down to leveraging the right analysis and measurement tools.



# How does a fragmented audience impact measurement?

Consumers might be bingeing with abandon. But they might also be gorging on selective content within their own online enclaves. That makes it challenging for brands to target campaigns, and measure their performance.

Marketing strategies must take into account the various channels and audiences across them. Yet, this is easier said than done.

Much of the data in the current landscape lives within siloed environments. Platforms like Facebook and Google are often referred to as **“walled gardens”**. This is because they control access to their data.

This means excellent targeting within these individual channels themselves. But they pose obstacles when we craft omnichannel campaigns with fragmented audiences.





# What should brands do next?

Audiences are not as isolated and polarised as we may think. Let's look at a study by the Journal of Communication that examined 236 media outlets. Network analysis by this study found high levels of audience duplication across channels.

## **So how should brands respond?**

Without a doubt, there has been a dramatic shift in the way audiences consume content. More diversity in audiences' preferences and platforms demands more detailed metrics.

This effectively opens up brand new avenues for us to explore. It presents us with opportunities to leverage a whole host of data points to track and measure audience behaviour to target and customise campaigns in a more streamlined manner.

While metrics such as gender and age group are undoubtedly important, these serve only as starting points. The trick lies in digging deeper than that. We should start looking more at audiences' behaviours, interests, and preferences.

**This means tapping into the events that bring audiences into a coherent whole to get a more nuanced idea of who they are.**

With the need to target audiences comes a new challenge. Brands need to be tracking more relevant metrics. We need to learn about the anatomy of a modern audience. Through this, we can identify data points that matter and craft more robust strategies.

**Find out more about unlocking out-of-reach audiences in a fragmented market with Cision Insights.**

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## CHAPTER 2

# The Anatomy of a Modern Audience

### What does the anatomy of the modern audience look like?

**This question has no straightforward answer.**

**The modern audience's position is ever-evolving. They're more empowered now than ever before – active, not passive; creators, not receivers; data controllers rather than data donors.**

Add in the compounding effects of audience fragmentation, and you can see why brands are finding it difficult to reach their customers: not only are they hard to define, but they're also hard to locate. But it's not all bad news for marketing professionals. While the makeup of the modern audience does pose plenty of obstacles, it also unlocks a number of opportunities. This is mainly because of the wealth of data points comms teams have at their disposal.

Of course, this poses a whole new set of challenges for comms teams to navigate. Due to the sea of audience data available, it can be very challenging to identify data points that are actually relevant.

**So, this begs a few key questions:**



What are the data points that matter – and don't matter – when it comes to measuring a modern audience?



How can brands use data to their advantage without becoming overwhelmed?

# The shifting position of the modern audience

Before getting into the nuts and bolts, let's take a top-level view of what today's audience looks like.

According to Wilbur Schramm, the founder of Communication Studies, “audiences” have always been considered “receivers”. Comms professionals accepted this for many years on end. But, as we all know by now, the sands have shifted on this front.

Communications theorist Denis McQuail's concept of audiences comes much closer to what we're witnessing today. His take was that the term audience could mean any or all of the following: seeker; consultant; browser; respondent; interlocutor; or conversationalist.

Today's consumer is more likely to be a curator and a creator. Their attitude to content is hands-on and involved, making the modern audience slower to listen and quicker to talk – the threshold for what's considered ‘valuable’ is raised, meaning a consumer will expect more relevance in return for their attention.

**Understanding an audience as dynamic and volatile as this is a Herculean task.**

**Delivering to such an audience?** This is perhaps even more challenging. But it can be done, with a little digging.



# Finding data points that matter

Brands need to have a holistic picture of who their audiences are. They also need to know where they consume their content. Where they either overlap or contrast with other affinity-based groups is also important. After that, it's possible to go beyond attracting an audience. You can build it from the ground up. It's about studying more behavioural data to track key metrics from the entry point to conversion.

■ Some data points that are worth looking out for include:



## **Demographics:**

These entry-level data points are necessary to get some basic information about your audience.



## **News and Social Media Consumption:**

What media and publications they consume shine a spotlight on the channels through which they can be targetted, as well as their content preferences.



## **Attitudes and Describers:**

This is reflective of their beliefs and values.



## **Brand Discovery:**

This mirrors their consumer journeys.



## **Interests:**

This sheds light on the communities they are a part of and their affiliations.



## **Living Arrangements:**

This information is indicative of their economic status.

Let's look at an example of an audience analysis we conducted on the eco-conscious consumer in the United Kingdom. While this is a diverse cohort, their affinities and conversations provide a clear picture of who they are and what their preferences entail.

## ■ Here are some of the insights we gathered on them:

This audience is more likely to be younger, well-educated, and economically well off. 33.2% of them have university degrees and 32% of them fall under a higher income bracket.

They expect more from their brands than average consumers in terms of listening to customer feedback, supporting charities, being socially responsible, being eco-friendly, and supporting local suppliers. 48.1% are interested in environmental issues and 55.3% are interested in wildlife/nature.

While search engines are the primary mode of brand discovery, this cohort is much more likely to discover brands in news, social media, and vlogs. While 39.2% of them discover brands through search engines and 28.8% through review sites, 12.1% are likely to find them via their own social channels, 11.9% through online news, and 6.9% through vlogs.

Members belonging to this group are more interested in different cultures and countries (64.1%). 40.6% believe that immigration is good for the country.

The above example is reflective of a rather diverse audience, and the data points selected provide a very comprehensive view of this consumer. In shedding light on their behaviours, interests and attitudes they lend a nuanced picture of the eco-conscious consumer.

Comms teams can use similar data points for other specialised and affiliate audience groups as well to get a clear picture of who they are, what they want, and how to reach out to them.

This granular-level information can feed into robust well-rounded consumer profiles. It's where comms professionals can glean necessary facts. They can then translate these into actionable insights that feed into their wider comms strategies and shape messaging to resonate with their target audiences.

**Find out more about how to reach out to your audience when they're more dispersed than ever before with Cision Insights.**

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## CHAPTER 3

# How Audience Insights Can Close Common Gaps in Your Communications Reports

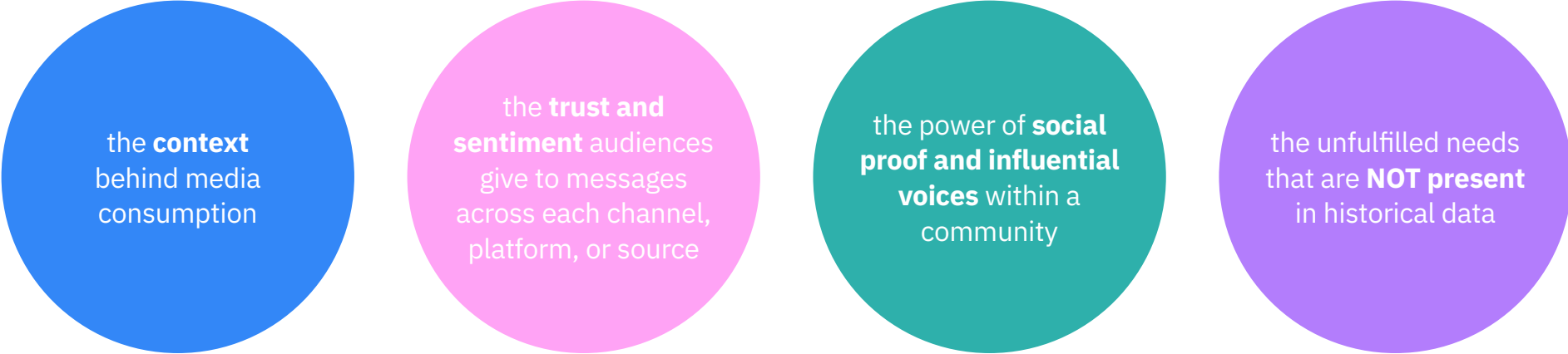
**Are your reports telling you what you really need to know... or are they simply a way to retrospectively justify decisions that were taken earlier on in the process?**

We show you how to take a step back and look at your reports on a top-level, so you can understand how to optimise them and enable your team to make smarter and more data-led communications decisions.

Are your comms reports telling you what you need to know about your audience... or are there still gaps that are holding back your campaigns? This may seem like a simple enough question – **but the answer to it isn't quite so straightforward.**



Tracking data points that answer questions about ‘who’ your audience is, is only the very first rung on the ladder. The value of data about an audience’s age, demographics, gender or education, and income level is limited **until it can be referenced against data that brings out:**



the **context**  
behind media  
consumption

the **trust and  
sentiment** audiences  
give to messages  
across each channel,  
platform, or source

the power of **social  
proof and influential  
voices** within a  
community

the unfulfilled needs  
that are **NOT present**  
in historical data

These are the ‘gaps’ that many PR teams struggle to fill in their reports. That calls for audience insights that can fill in the blind spots and close the gaps to reveal deeper underlying stories. Every single data point forms a part of the greater whole. It’s about tracing each spot – and linking it to the next – **until you have a complete picture.**



# Facing the wrong direction

Often, marketers fall into a rut. They try to build their strategy on the data they have, not the data they need. Research by Harvard Business Review shows that 32% of businesses use “descriptive analysis”, but this level of insight is doing no one any favours. It’s incomplete, lacking nuance, and unlikely to reach beyond the short tail.

“ More than ever, marketers need accurate up-to-date analytical insights to understand, identify, locate, and target their prospects and customers. ”

Debbie Oates, Director of Customer Engagement, Experian

In order to uncover a richer story with all its twists, turns, subplots, and every character’s unique perspective, there needs to be a shift in the way in which we analyse and audit audience data. **So, how can you make a much-needed pivot from descriptive analysis to proactive strategy?** It starts with having the tools to audit audience reports for the following.

# Demographics, interests, and behavioural data

By tracking and mapping data, comms teams can follow the path from an audience's existing interests and attitudes to the subsequent factors that influence purchasing decisions.

It looks beyond who they are to what they do before they buy, enabling comms teams to craft messaging accordingly and refine broad consumer research into sector-specific analysis.

Currently, only 7% of businesses use data prescriptively, but the future cannot be taken so lightly. That's why comms teams need to mine existing data from reports for clues on what will enhance success in the future, synthesising data across channels, devices, and timelines.

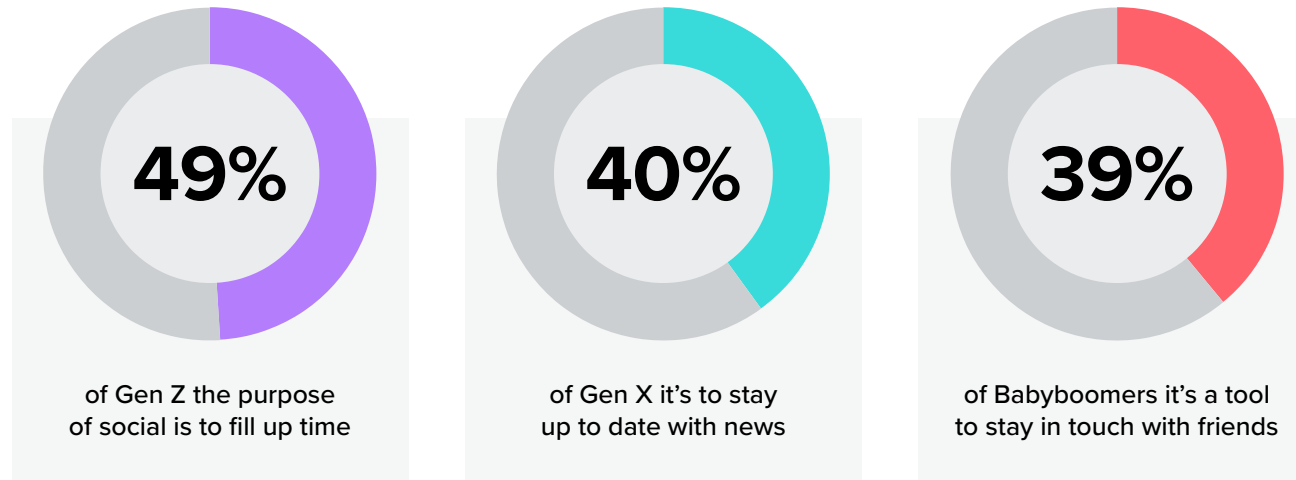
The picture is more complex than we might expect at first. But, the good news is that studies point to how demographic data alone can be used to explain certain behaviours such as language, technology use, and social activities.



# Asking ‘why?’ as well as ‘who?’

For example, we might know who is using each social media platform, but the more valuable insight is from discovering why different demographics are using particular channels.

■ That leads us to discover that we’re not all using social media for the same reason:



# And what makes this so important?

Give teams this kind of behavioural data to leverage and they can start to connect the dots, optimise content for different channels, and fill in the gaps where audiences could be engaged with a range of choices. The journey is unlikely to be linear. Audiences do not always encounter and absorb messaging in the order we intended.

They might hop between devices and channels, lose the thread (or interest) at critical moments, or disappear “down the rabbit hole” in search of more information when we least expected it.

In turn, our messaging might have to take several passes at the same touch points from different angles, lean on influencers to add authority at key junctures, and above all be ready to answer questions in the order our audience asks them – not according to a prescriptive timeline of our own making.

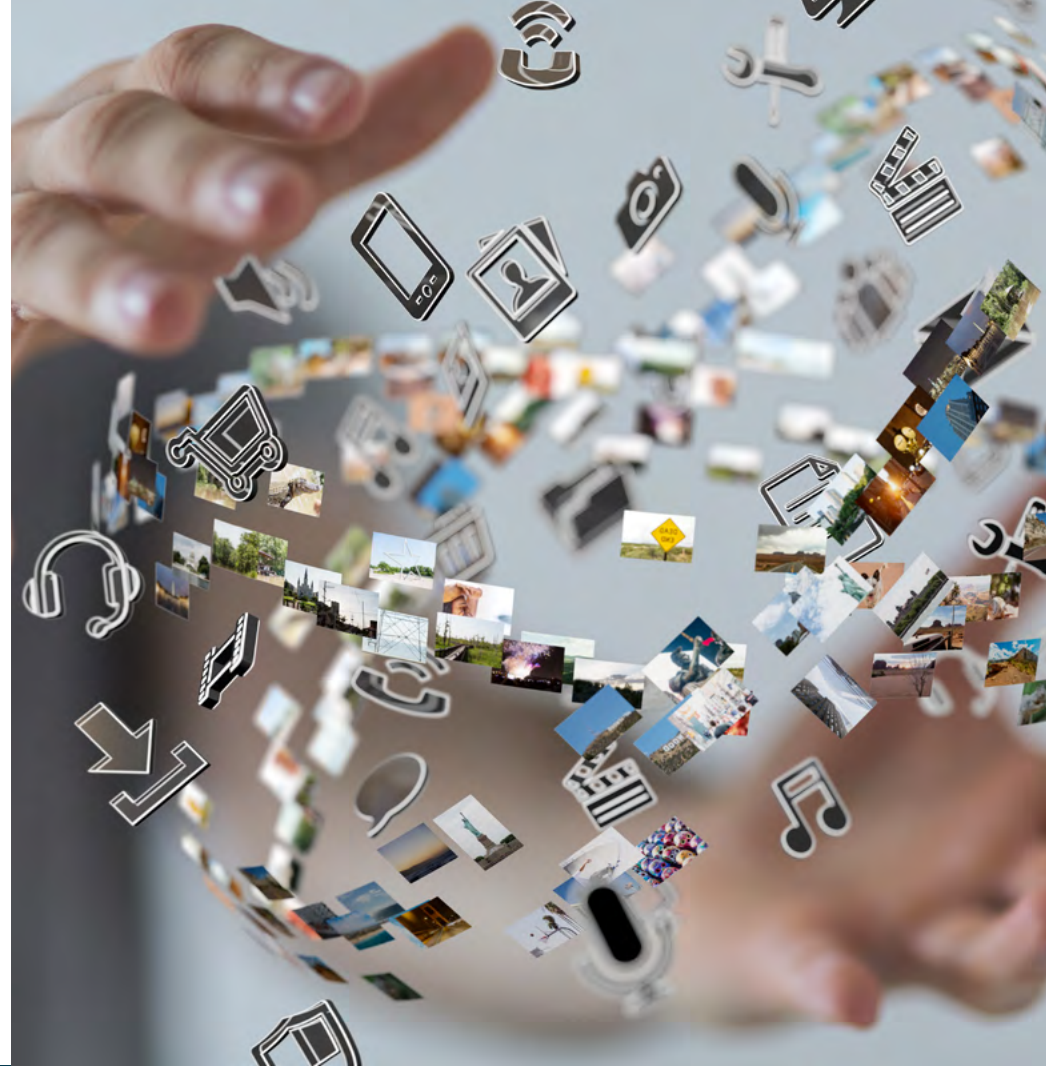


# Targeting in the age of ‘News Find Me’

Audience data reveals which sources and platforms are most valuable to a target audience. By extension, that insight reveals which outlets are most effective for engaging them using target media lists and social media outreach. As campaigns evolve, targets and engagement strategies can be refined to support more accurate campaign reporting.

It's unwise to make any assumptions about news and media consumption, given the speed with which both are evolving. Audiences are increasingly gathering around niche news sources that align with their existing persuasion, and there's a continued shift towards the so-called “News Find Me” approach.

Instead of consulting the news, audiences are curating what is allowed to reach their feed. That puts some keywords potentially out of bounds.



# Audiences instead of channels

As a result, brands need to align their content with those audiences, not the channels themselves. They need to be aware too of the political and social connotations associated with certain messages, and make inferences about what triggers may be involved. We're in an era where anything from personal healthcare to dietary choices can be politicised and polarising, so brands have to tread delicately with audiences who may define themselves through their news and media consumption choices.

## KEY TAKEAWAY

If audiences are more passive in their news and media consumption (but more assertive in their preferences), the onus is on brands to get more granular with their content to reach the long tail.

That may mean finding the micro-influencers who can draw content deeper towards niche segments and help refine generic messaging into something more salient or palatable.



# Data points that paint a picture

By 2020, global audiences were consuming almost 500 minutes of media daily on average. Never have brands had so much opportunity to reach so many consumers for so long. At the same time, it's harder to carve out a share of the audience, given the fragmented landscape.

- To close the gaps in communications reports, comms teams need news and media consumption data that provides insight on the following in particular:

## Habits:

What time of day are consumers reaching for their smartphone, and is their attention focused or distracted when they do?

## Format:

The value of video content makes it a priority format, but even here there is a range of options, from longer explainer content to “Shorts” and rapid-fire info blasts lasting just a few seconds. Consumers also have a choice between owned and streaming content, affecting the longevity of messaging.

## Devices:

Are consumers looking for snackable content on mobile, or more scrollable coverage on desktop?

## Personalisation:

Consumers have a simple choice: enjoy a generic free version of a news or media service, or subscribe to a service in return for better personalisation. Research shows that cost is by no means a barrier to entry and that 76% of consumers will pay for original content with limited distribution.

## Shaping brand perceptions

Behind every purchase, there's a perception, wrapped up in the values that a consumer associates with each brand. Audience data can drill down into what values really resonate so that messages and actions can be tailored accordingly.

Comms teams get a forward-facing data stream that can provide a foundation for ongoing reputation analysis and management.

Communications reports do provide useful individual data points. But to audit the data, teams need a perspective of the broader ecosystem.

So-called “vanity metrics” such as likes and shares, may give a glimpse of the bigger picture. But auditing should take into account the sentiment and influence behind each engagement. This insight can be applied to create a richer, more well rounded profile. In that sense, auditing evolves data sets, and cross-referencing sources to build a more complex picture.

## Measuring sentiment

Traditional methods such as focus groups, forums, and surveys are still effective, but these are limited to showing the “filtered” view. For the unfiltered version, social media monitoring reveals what audiences really think of brands - and how their perceptions can be challenged or reshaped in the future.

## Success for Volvo

Volvo's traditionally boxy design was perceived as safe yet sensible by consumers. Without compromising on these important features, the brand used audience sentiment data to pivot towards a more minimalist message that chimed with the fashion for all things Scandi. Mapping the message to an emerging trend helped Volvo reposition a lack of flourishes as a benefit for consumers.



# The importance of brand values



There's an increasing urgency to monitor brand values. Increasingly, brands are expected to take a position on issues making the headlines, even when governments stay silent. That's particularly true when it comes to sustainability and diversity.

One IBM study found that purpose-driven customers now account for 44% of consumers overall. To serve them, brands need to be more transparent, build communities, and take on a more collaborative approach. The insights from communications reports reveal where the boundaries lie for customers when it comes to values. To close the gap, brands can adapt their own

messaging to take a step towards their customer communities. It's important to remember, however, that brand perception belongs to the consumer, not the company, and that a company's actions carry far more weight than the mission statement on the About Us page. Where brands can be proactive is in pushing back against negative coverage, correcting factual errors before they spread, and maintaining a presence in the conversation.

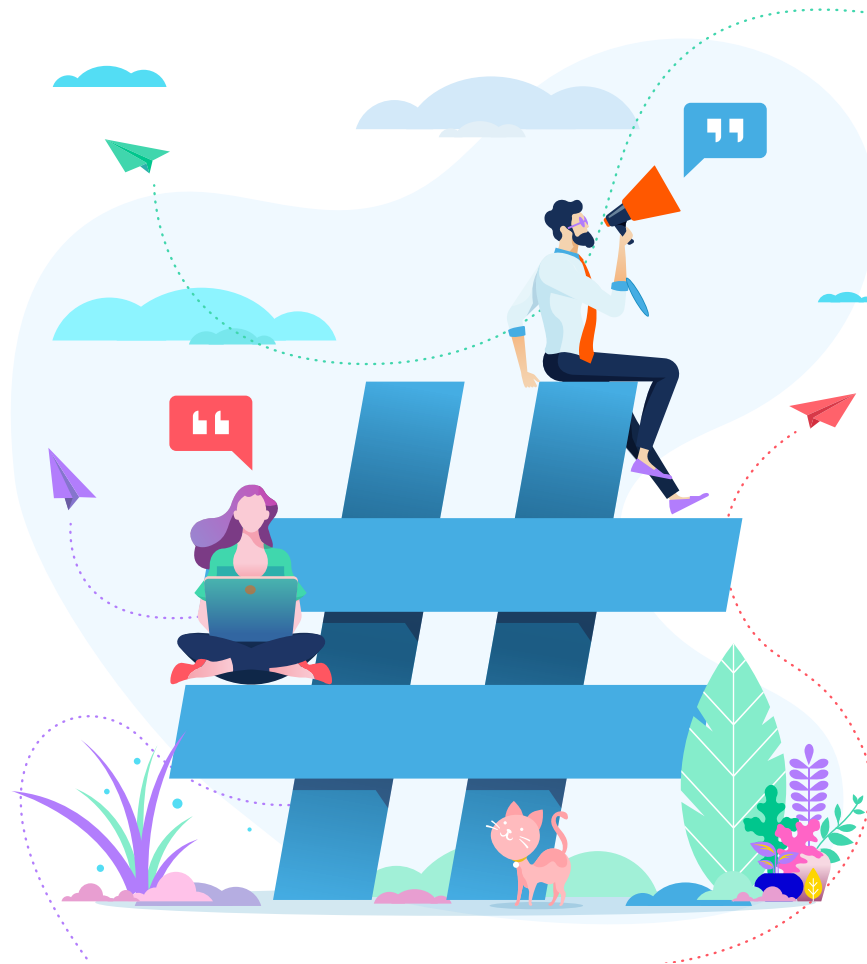
With a consistent strategy, comms teams can turn brand value into brand equity - the intangible value that the world's best-loved brands accumulate from their purpose and mission, rather than their products alone.

# So how do we move forward?

By addressing the gaps in behavioural data, news and media consumption, and brand positioning, comms teams can take a more confident, data-informed step toward future campaigns. The vast amounts of data we collect from consumers can work harder. The goal is not simply to know more about who our customers are. It is to dig deeper into how brands fit into their lives.

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## CHAPTER 4

# Audience Profile: The Business Decision Maker

One of the recurring, yet often overlooked, barriers to crafting a strong communications strategy is obtaining a deep view of the target audience profile. The answer to the question “How much do we actually know about our client?” is sometimes surprisingly vague.

That’s especially true when we rely on broad metrics to build an audience profile, such as:

- age
- demographics
- income segment

These might define essential parameters, but these are not to be confused with insight into what makes our customers “tick”. We need to distinguish between the data points that show us what our audience looks like and those that actually reveal a clear picture of **why** and **how** they engage with content and how to pivot your comms strategy accordingly.



## Dig deeper for more detail

That means looking deeper than the surface level and aiming for a more detailed view of audience attitudes, perceptions, and journeys.

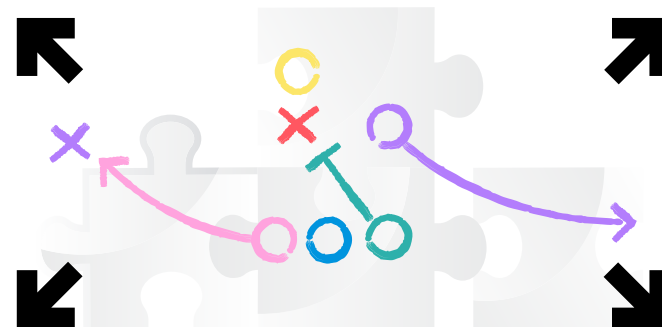
- So how do communications teams deploy these insights to evolve a more effective communications strategy, to help them:



Build a bigger, richer profile of their audience;



Identify the data points that matter, even when audiences are fragmented?



Recent research by Cision Insights incorporates data from GWI to enrich Cision's rich media consumption and engagement data to better understand the **Business Decision Maker** audience, illustrating how comms teams can see the big picture.

The profile provides an example of how marketing and communications professionals can get a clearer understanding of any audience's needs, self-perception, and behaviour. With this insight at their fingertips, teams can develop more precise and targeted strategies to reach their audiences.

# Unleash the complete insight from data

These are the tools that turn digitisation, social media, and audience fragmentation into an opportunity, not an obstacle. They allow comms professionals to explore fresh avenues, gain a deeper understanding of their customers and rely less on assumptions about audiences based solely on what media they consume.

Crucially, they explore the context behind consumer decisions to a greater degree. They recognise, for example, that audiences (in this case business decision makers) divide their time between personal and professional duties, and draw their influences from sources that may not necessarily fit into neat sector-specific silos. Ultimately, they give data a human face.

**So where should we be looking for enlightenment about our target audiences?** The insight methodology employed by Cision focuses on the following essential metrics.



# Demographics – adapting the message according to gender and age

The power of digital channels compared to print or broadcast is that they allow communications teams to break free of core demographics as the main targeting tool.

Because teams can collect a wide variety of data based on behaviour, sentiment, and engagement, they can look deeper than simply “who” the audience is. That said, demographics should not be overlooked entirely. They are the starting point from which other metrics evolve.

## Segmenting messages by gender

The audience report reveals that the business decision maker target audience is still overwhelmingly male (61%), although distribution among age groups is more balanced.

With this insight at their fingertips, comms teams might spot an opportunity, for example, to distance themselves from the noise by crafting campaigns that target the 39% of decision makers who are not male. The tone and messaging could reflect the challenges many female decision makers face when dealing with C-suites that are male-dominated and articulate a vision for a more equal, equitable decision-making process.

We should be wary of making any assumptions about what content appeals to a specific gender or age group, and recognise that there are often notable anomalies in how demographic age groups behave, but we still need this fundamental snapshot of who our audience is.

In turn, this can allow communications teams to target the publications and channels where they are more likely to find their audience or subsets of their audience.

# Changing the channel

This raw data can be mapped against insight we also know about the popularity of channels and devices per age group to improve targeting, for example. In this case, the dominant cohort (male, aged 34 to 44) might be ripe for snackable video content, and messaging should appeal to an audience that is hitting its professional prime.

We also need to know what the emotional limitations are for each age group. Content that wants to engage Gen Z or Millennial audiences should appeal to their forward-facing professional ambition, whereas campaigns that target mature audiences should support them in building out their legacy.



# Education and Income Segments and their messaging triggers

Audience education data is valuable in establishing where comms teams may need to fill in knowledge gaps, while income data illustrates the trajectory of an audience (up to a certain point). The important insight isn't so much in the historical data about what level of education an audience achieved, however. Instead, comms teams need clues about how their audiences best like to absorb new information.

An audience that has “learned on the job” might prefer demos and free trials, for example, whereas those who completed postgraduate or technical qualifications might be more comfortable with self-service white papers and more detail-specific long-form content.

Likewise, income level alone isn't an indicator of an audience's professional buying power, but it does give a hint of what triggers and motivations content should engage on a personal level. The marketing team that gave us the “No one ever got fired for buying IBM” campaign understood this friction perfectly. Successful decision makers can expect to earn more.

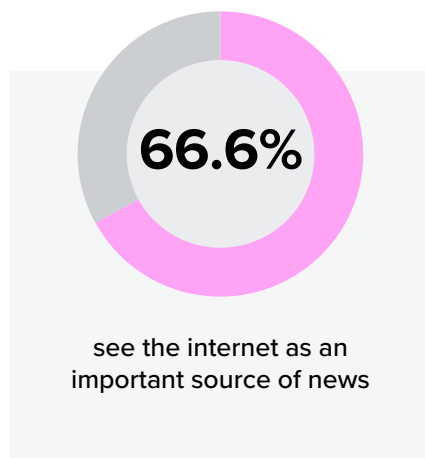
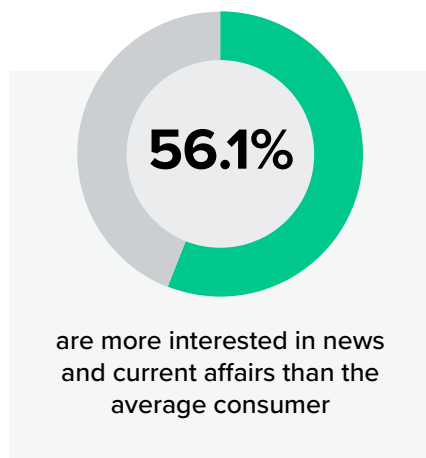




# News Consumption – finding the most relevant source

Obtaining a complete view of the news consumption of our audience is essential for defining the touch points to reach them.

- In the case of business decision makers, they are above average consumers of news and current affairs:



When audiences are seeking news across a wide variety of outlets, it's even more important to know how they will find the information they are looking for.

Our research shows that younger business decision makers lean towards engaging on social. Their go-to websites include the likes of BuzzFeed and Vice. Senior-level decision makers, on the other hand, will be more likely to pay for premium, in-depth paywall content and subscribe to publications like the Financial Times.

How can that insight be applied to future campaigns? For a start, it points to numerous opportunities to capture share of voice through both paid and earned media.

Secondly, an audience that actively seeks to stay informed is one that wields influence too. Give decision makers content they can share, boosting their profile in the process, and they can lead a brand towards secondary audiences.

# Grabbing your audience's attention

Establishing the news appetite for any audience is a priority benchmark. For audiences with a heavy appetite, content should land in the technical or professional publications they subscribe to, and on the sites that they check regularly.

For less news-hungry consumers, content may need to lead them more gently towards the landing page, perhaps starting with a more lifestyle-oriented hook to capture attention.

Despite legitimate concerns about audience fragmentation and the decline of traditional news, business decision makers are still surprisingly conventional in whom they choose, with the BBC, The Guardian, Sky News, CNN, and Mail Online the recurring favourites.

Nevertheless, they are also likely to supplement their mainstream media with specialist print, online, and broadcast sources, such as International Business Times, Bloomberg, and CNBC.

What then becomes important is engaging with the journalists who are most capable of producing content that will be relevant. Cision data reveals that different media outlets need to be employed to connect with business decision makers across B2C and B2B organisations.

While the Mail Online is best suited to engage business decision makers selling B2C products, Bloomberg or The Guardian are most effective in reaching out to B2B decision makers.



# When to unleash the influencers

In terms of messaging and depth of content, they naturally expect their specialist publications to go into more granular detail than mainstream sources. That's the cue to involve respected influencers and journalists who can bridge the gap from top-level messaging to premium insider content that (often) justifies the cost of a subscription.

This is the traditional end of the spectrum. For other audiences, comms teams may have to include the forums and platforms away from the mainstream that nevertheless carries influence.

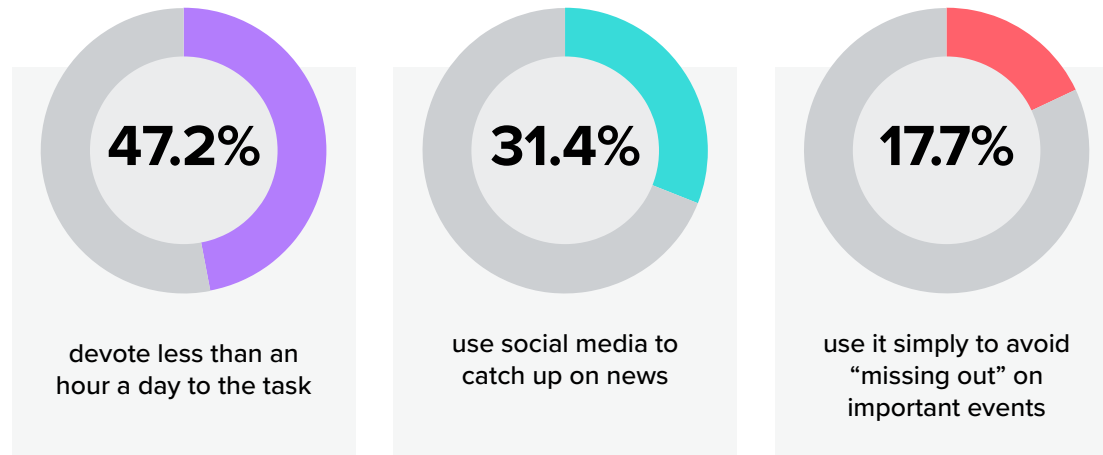
Depending on the sector, there may be social media, blogs, or YouTube channels, for example, that serves as the unofficial gatekeepers for evaluating new product or service launches into the market.



# Social consumption:

## Where professional and personal collide

- Compared to the global average of 147 minutes spent on social media per day, business decision makers are actually relatively light users:



The example shows that the importance of social media varies enormously across audiences, not to mention the trust and credibility consumers assign to what pops up on their feeds.

Comms teams should dismiss social media as diversion or entertainment at their peril, however. Increasingly, it is the most important source for authentic, exclusive, niche content.

Depending on the target audience and sector, campaign managers will have to decide whether to position social media as the spearhead for messaging or as a complementary channel for building a wider audience for print or broadcast content.

# Why brands must reach across platforms

The business decision maker demographic is similar to the wider online community in favouring Facebook (78.7%) and Instagram (60.9%) as the most popular channels, although unlocking the professional benefits of Twitter (54.8%) and LinkedIn (47.7%) is more clearly defined among business decision makers.

The data shows that marketers should be wary of assuming that consumers in a specific sector (eg. business) can only be reached through the media associated with that audience, however.

We know that every social media user typically curates a portfolio of platforms – 8.4 accounts per person on average – so the difficulty is not so much in picking the right one as understanding the mindset of the audience on each one.

For some platforms (eg. Instagram), audiences are looking for ideas. For others (such as LinkedIn) they are looking for content that they can share with their network to enhance their status.



Facebook  
78.7%



Instagram  
60.9%



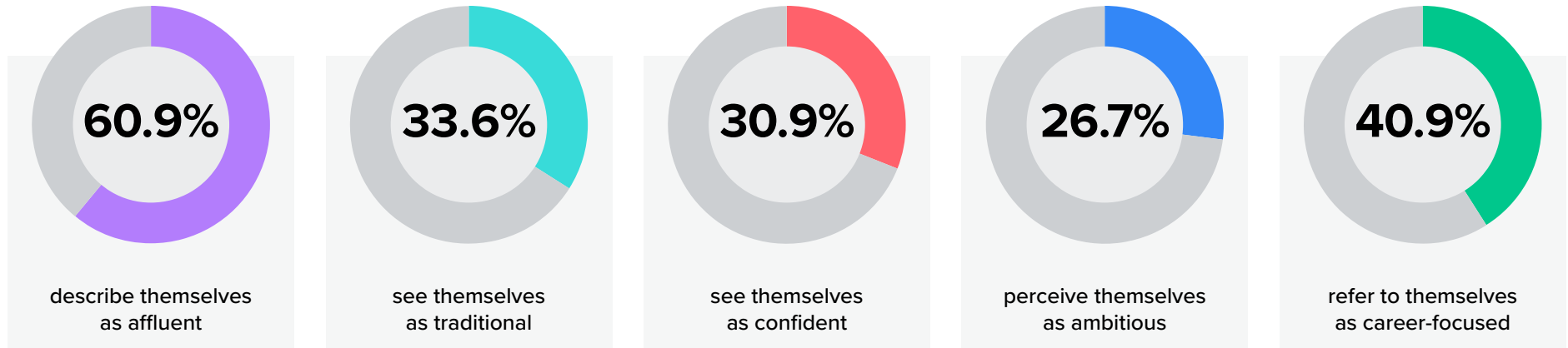
Twitter  
54.9%



LinkedIn  
47.7%

# Attitudes and Describers – audience self-perception

It may not always tally with the actual behavioural and engagement data, but the way an audience describes itself at least shows marketers where customers want to be – and may give clues as to how to reach that destination. The way this demographic sees itself is particularly illuminating, and by no means a neat correlation to the way marketing professionals often project their assumptions:



# Looking beneath the surface

Communications teams know only too well that the way audiences portray themselves outwardly and consider themselves introspectively rarely match.

Consequently, reports need to dive deep into the aspirations, reservations, and even primal envy or greed behind a decision. In turn, that will influence the degree to which social proof is a decisive factor, or whether an endorsement from a respected influencer or celebrity is required.



# Pain points to trigger

**Business decision makers have their triggers too.**



While this primary data is important to collect, it should be corroborated with secondary data to test the veracity. We cannot take it for granted, for example, that a consumer who describes themselves as price-conscious automatically chooses the cheaper option. Other factors may ultimately matter more.

**Where should brands focus messaging for consumers in the buyer journey?** In the case of business decision makers, there's a strong showing

of early adopters, with 17.1% saying they would buy new tech as soon as it was available. For other audiences, however, there may be a far higher proportion of laggards, and the time between awareness and decision may be much longer and require a greater complexity of touch points.

Communications teams would be wise to appeal to the emotional triggers as well as financial and professional. In the research, there's the illuminating statistic that 23.5% of business decision makers feel overworked.

Admittedly, that's a self-perception, not a proven fact, but it's an example of the "tiny noticeable details" that brands should look out for when differentiating their messaging. Even these more subtle signals can help communications professionals understand how to create content around topics & themes that will make their brand resonate with audiences.

Cision can then track this within the news and social media to understand how often your product is discussed, reducing workload and easing processes.



# Brands should be asking these questions...

Using the example of the business decision maker data from the above, it's possible to see what marketing professionals can achieve with a richer, more sophisticated set of data points from which to build a communications strategy.

No longer are communications teams restricted to knowing simply “who” their target customer is. They can progress to exploring the “why” and the “how” of the decisions their audience makes about media consumption and purchasing.

In turn, this insight can lay the intelligent foundation for what messages to convey, what channels to prioritise, and what pain points and triggers to appeal to. Cision offers the tools to evolve from descriptive to proactive audience analysis. Brands can unlock a level of insight into their customers that is otherwise out of reach.

**Uncover data points that reveal a complete picture of your audience and customise messaging with Cision Insights.**

[Speak to one of our consultants today >](#)





Our Global Insights team provide the tools and expertise to help some of the world's biggest brands monitor, optimise and exceed their communication objectives.

Our beyond-meticulous, Sector Analysts are dedicated to helping you understand what your audience is saying - both in the news and in conversations happening across social media – why they're saying it, and how to turn that information into action.

