



Media Consumer Survey 2022

Australian media and digital
entertainment insights

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Introduction

When it comes to digital entertainment, consumer choice has exploded over the past decade. The unbundling of content propositions to individual studios, broadcasters, publishers and other players has scattered content far and wide.

While growth in digital subscription penetration across subscription video on demand (SVOD), music, gaming, news and sport is slowing, we continue to stack more and more services in each of these categories. Consumers are learning to navigate this complex environment though and we're seeing more savvy, proactive and frequent switching behaviours as consumers self-curate the perfect media bundle.

Media players have responded rapidly to these increasingly sophisticated behaviours, seeking to retain share of mind and attention as subscribers feel the pinch when it comes to the cumulative cost of media. This has heralded the launch of new ad-funded propositions, re-shuffling of features across paid tiers and greater flexibility in bite-sized paid access options. Audiences are becoming more comfortable with trade-offs between experience and cost, and this is spurring greater innovation in the ways organisations monetise their content.

Amid competition between digital media subscription providers, the broader battle for consumers' time and attention is intensifying. Social media and user generated content (UGC) is consuming a greater share of our entertainment time; acting as a single destination for content in all its forms – video reels, live streams, articles, photos, music, games and even shopping. Though older generations are still more engaged with longer-form content, dedicated video platforms like TikTok continue to rise, and it's becoming increasingly important to sate appetites for short-form content and 'lean-back' experiences.

Our eleventh Media Consumer Survey focuses on audience behaviours, attitudes and trends in digital media and entertainment services. We delve into the opportunities and challenges for audiences and the industry, including:

- The proactive approach consumers are adopting to manage their digital media relationships in the battleground for audience attention.
- How increasing pressure on entertainment budgets are compelling media providers to rethink the way they attract and retain subscribers.

- The impact of social media and UGC on generational consumption habits.
- The generational differences in how news is defined and consumed, and what drives trustworthiness in information sources across providers.
- How engagement with sport is evolving across a much broader and more varied content experience.

This year's survey provides a broad **snapshot of audience behaviour** during a period of changing market dynamics in a post-pandemic setting, with **new perspectives and insights, and vigorous conversation** relevant for your organisation.



About this survey

The 2022 edition of the Media Consumer Survey provides insight into how Australians across five generations (from Gen Z to Matures) consume media and entertainment, particularly through digital channels. We investigate how this has changed over time; examine the behaviours, preferences and trends impacting the industry; and infer how they may change in the future.

In its eleventh consecutive year, our survey was again conducted by an independent research organisation using self-reported survey data gathered from more than 2,000 consumers across Australia. As in all previous years, there have been amendments to the list of questions to ensure all data collected is relevant. This allows us to explore new and emerging behaviours and trends in media and entertainment consumption. This year, alongside general updates, we have revitalised our questions related to trust and influence of news as well as the next horizon of media given the relevance at both a global level as well as for Australia.



Will Castles
Partner – Consulting
National Tech, Media & Telco Industry Leader
wcastles@deloitte.com.au



Peter Corbett
Partner – Consulting
National Telco Leader
pcorbett@deloitte.com.au



Jeremy Smith
Director – Consulting
National Media & Entertainment Leader
jeremsmith@deloitte.com.au

Survey participant age groups



Gen Z
16-24



Millennials
25-38



Gen X
39-55



Boomers
56-74



Matures
75+



Mind over matter

A generational snapshot: age, not just a number

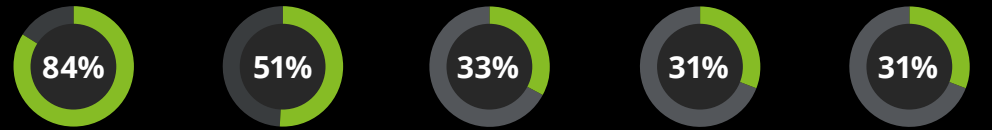


OVERALL

\$62
Average monthly spend on digital entertainment subscriptions

TOP 3 HOME ENTERTAINMENT ACTIVITIES

- #1** Watching live free-to-air TV
- #2** Watching paid TV/movie services
- #3** Browsing the internet



Have at least one paid entertainment subscription | Have three or more paid entertainment subscriptions | Have added one or more subscriptions in the last six months | Have cancelled one or more subscriptions in the last six months | Are exceeding their target monthly entertainment budget

3.1 Average number of paid entertainment subscriptions in the household | **3.3** Weekly hours spent watching video on social media | **2.8** Weekly hours spent watching catch up free-to-air TV | **11** Weekly hours spent watching live free-to-air TV | **9.3** Weekly hours spent watching paid movie/video streaming

Spend most of their social media time on:



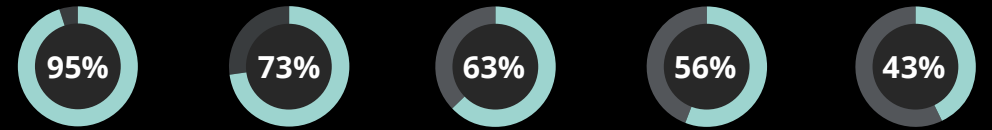
Get their news most frequently from:
Television | Newspaper | Radio

GEN Z AGE: 16-24

\$82
Average monthly spend on digital entertainment subscriptions

TOP 3 HOME ENTERTAINMENT ACTIVITIES

- #1** Watching paid TV/movie services
- #2** Browsing social media
- #3** Browsing the internet



Have at least one paid entertainment subscription | Have three or more paid entertainment subscriptions | Have added one or more subscriptions in the last six months | Have cancelled one or more subscriptions in the last six months | Are exceeding their target monthly entertainment budget

4.5 Average number of paid entertainment subscriptions in the household | **8.1** Weekly hours spent watching video on social media | **5.1** Weekly hours spent watching catch up free-to-air TV | **6.5** Weekly hours spent watching live free-to-air TV | **11.4** Weekly hours spent watching paid movie/video streaming

Spend most of their social media time on:



Get their news most frequently from:
Social media | Digital news aggregators | Television

Mind over matter

A generational snapshot: age, not just a number

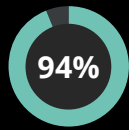


MILLENNIALS
AGE: 25-38

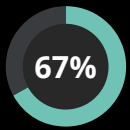


TOP 3 HOME ENTERTAINMENT ACTIVITIES

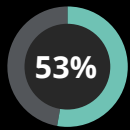
- #1 Watching paid TV/movie services
- #2 Browsing the internet
- #3 Browsing social media



Have at least one paid entertainment subscription



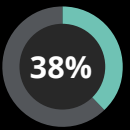
Have three or more paid entertainment subscriptions



Have added one or more subscriptions in the last six months



Have cancelled one or more subscriptions in the last six months



Are exceeding their target monthly entertainment budget

4.2

Average number of paid entertainment subscriptions in the household

4.7

Weekly hours spent watching video on social media

3.1

Weekly hours spent watching catch up free-to-air TV

5.6

Weekly hours spent watching live free-to-air TV

9.7

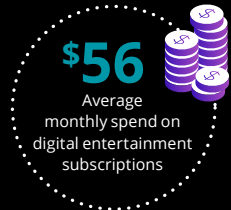
Weekly hours spent watching paid movie/ video streaming

Spend most of their social media time on:



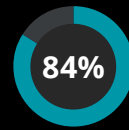
Get their news most frequently from:
Social media | Television | Printed newspapers

GEN X
AGE: 39-55

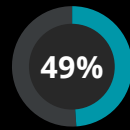


TOP 3 HOME ENTERTAINMENT ACTIVITIES

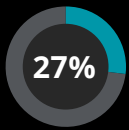
- #1 Watching paid TV/movie services
- #2 Browsing the internet
- #3 Watching live free-to-air TV



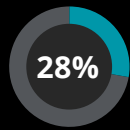
Have at least one paid entertainment subscription



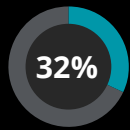
Have three or more paid entertainment subscriptions



Have added one or more subscriptions in the last six months



Have cancelled one or more subscriptions in the last six months



Are exceeding their target monthly entertainment budget

2.8

Average number of paid entertainment subscriptions in the household

2.6

Weekly hours spent watching video on social media

2.1

Weekly hours spent watching catch up free-to-air TV

10.1

Weekly hours spent watching live free-to-air TV

9.5

Weekly hours spent watching paid movie/ video streaming

Spend most of their social media time on:



Get their news most frequently from:
Television | Printed newspapers | Social media

Mind over matter

A generational snapshot: age, not just a number

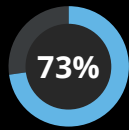


BOOMERS
AGE: 56-74

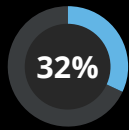


TOP 3 HOME ENTERTAINMENT ACTIVITIES

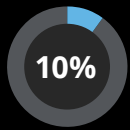
#1 Watching live free-to-air TV	#2 Browsing the internet	#3 Watching paid TV/movie services
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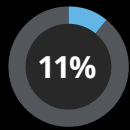
Have at least one paid entertainment subscription



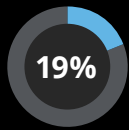
Have three or more paid entertainment subscriptions



Have added one or more subscriptions in the last six months



Have cancelled one or more subscriptions in the last six months



Are exceeding their target monthly entertainment budget

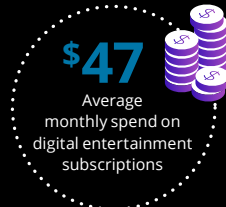
1.9 Average number of paid entertainment subscriptions in the household	1.1 Weekly hours spent watching video on social media	2.3 Weekly hours spent watching catch up free-to-air TV	17.6 Weekly hours spent watching live free-to-air TV	8.2 Weekly hours spent watching paid movie/ video streaming
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Spend most of their social media time on:



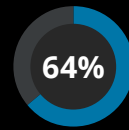
Get their news most frequently from:
Television | Printed newspapers | Radio

MATURES
AGE: 75+

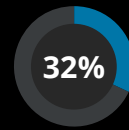


TOP 3 HOME ENTERTAINMENT ACTIVITIES

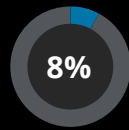
#1 Watching live free-to-air TV	#2 Browsing the internet	#3 Watching pay TV (live or on-demand)
--	---------------------------------	---



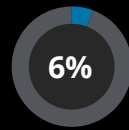
Have at least one paid entertainment subscription



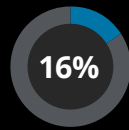
Have three or more paid entertainment subscriptions



Have added one or more subscriptions in the last six months



Have cancelled one or more subscriptions in the last six months



Are exceeding their target monthly entertainment budget

1.6 Average number of paid entertainment subscriptions in the household	0.5 Weekly hours spent watching video on social media	2.8 Weekly hours spent watching catch up free-to-air TV	21.6 Weekly hours spent watching live free-to-air TV	5.2 Weekly hours spent watching paid movie/ video streaming
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Spend most of their social media time on:



Get their news most frequently from:
Television | Printed newspapers | Radio

Subscriptions

Sometimes, more is more



Australians are stacking digital entertainment subscriptions, climbing from:



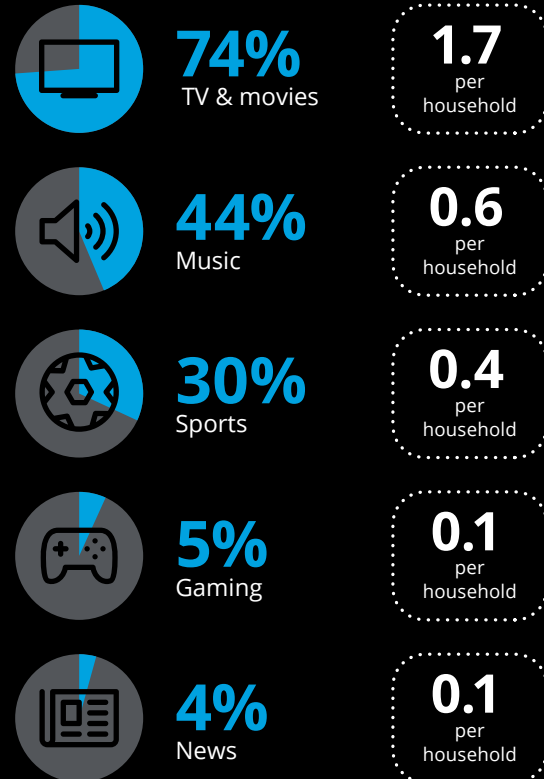
2.3

per household in 2021, to

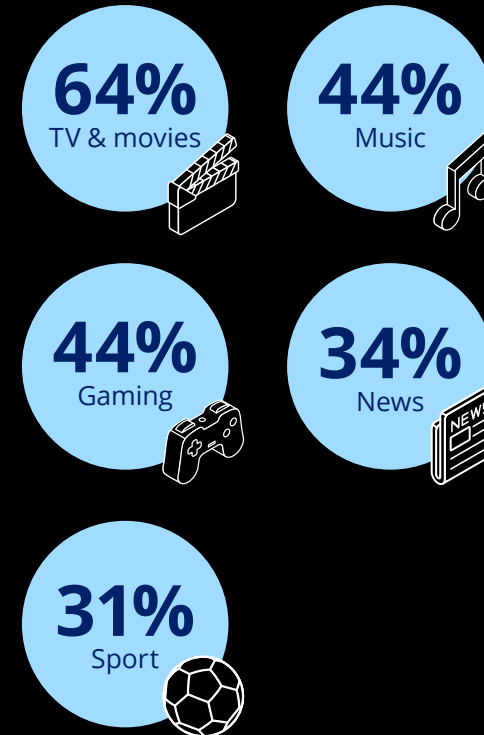
3.1

per household in 2022

SVOD (TV & movies) beats all others combined...



...but many have subscriptions they barely use (under one hour per month):



Subscriptions

Churn concerns, cost upturns



Switch on, switch off:

33%

added a subscription in the last six months

31%

cancelled a subscription in the last six months

Cost tops the biggest drivers of SVOD (TV & movies) cancellations...

- #1** Reduce overall spending on video subscriptions
- #2** Rather watch free-to-air TV
- #3** Prices increased and there were similar cheaper alternatives

...but most consumers don't plan on cutting back:

61% will have the same number of SVOD subscriptions in 12 months time

- ↑ 18%** will have more
- ↓ 5%** will have fewer

Monthly spend on digital entertainment is rising...



...and most households are overspending:

\$55 average target monthly budget

\$62
per month in 2022
(\$55 in 2021, up 13%)



Gen Z are the biggest overspenders...



Average spend of **\$82**, target budget of **\$67**

...and only Boomers are staying close to their budget spend:

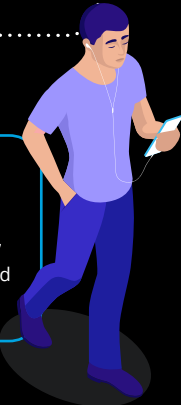


Average spend of **\$44**, target budget of **\$43**



Every category is feeling it:

Category	Added	Cancelled
Sport	48%	35%
SVOD	33%	29%
Gaming	28%	21%
Music	30%	24%
News	15%	7%

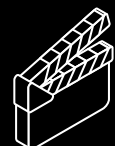


64%

are concerned about the cost of multiple subscriptions

When facing budget cuts, digital entertainment is the 4th category:

- #1** Eating out
- #2** Alcohol & tobacco
- #3** Groceries
- #4** Digital entertainment



Advertising

A love-hate relationship



We're hungry for ad-free content...



58%
would pay for ad-free TV and movies



48%
would pay for ad-free music



39%
would pay for ad-free sports

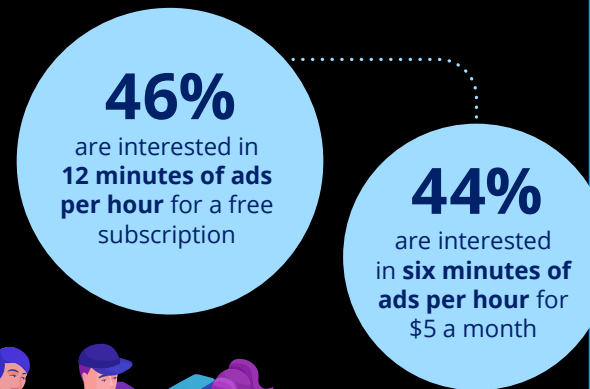


36%
would pay for ad-free news



34%
would pay for ad-free games

...but for SVOD, we can stomach a compromise:



We're most willing to engage with ads on...



43%
Television



27%
Smartphones



12%
Laptop computers



7%
Desktop computers

...and some channels have more influence on buying decisions than others:



#1

42%

are influenced by ads on free-to-air TV



#2

35%

are influenced by ads on shopping websites

#3

34%

are influenced by ads on social media



Social

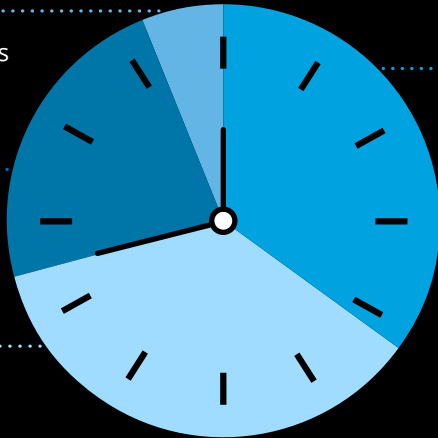
Feeling the need for feeds

Daily social media consumption continues to rise:

6% spend 6-10 hours
(5% in 2021)

23% spend 2-5 hours
(21% in 2021)

36% spend 1-2 hours
(28% in 2021)



35% spend less than one hour
(42% in 2021)



Our favourite social media activities are:

#1

Browsing feeds (23%)

#2

Messaging friends (22%)

#3

Watching videos (18%)

The lines between virtual and physical reality continue to blur:

68%

find engaging with friends and family on social media as rewarding as engaging in real life



...and it proves to be very sticky:

64%

spend more time watching UGC than planned

Social media is a springboard:

49%

use socials to discover content on other platforms

The crowd of creators continues to grow:

39%

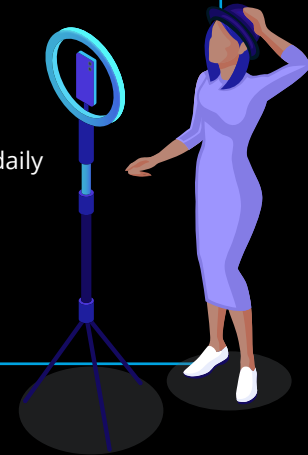
create and share content

UGC is increasingly popular...

15% watch **more than two hours** of UGC daily

48% watch **up to two hours** daily

59% watch **more** UGC now than **six months** ago



News

Regaining trust and influence



News consumption is fragmented:



TV news programs
the most frequent source of news for **34%** of respondents



Social media platforms (14%)



Newspapers (13%)



Radio (10%)

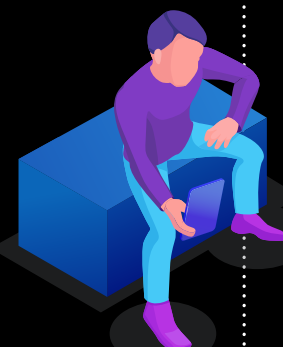


Digital news aggregators (8%)

Australians most value...

- **#1** Perceived trustworthiness of content (82%)
- **#2** Perceived quality of content (79%)
- **#3** Ease of accessing content (75%)

...ahead of:
a unique voice and perspective that can't be found elsewhere (62%)



Consumers find these providers most trustworthy...



75%

small and regional news publishers

71%

major news publishers



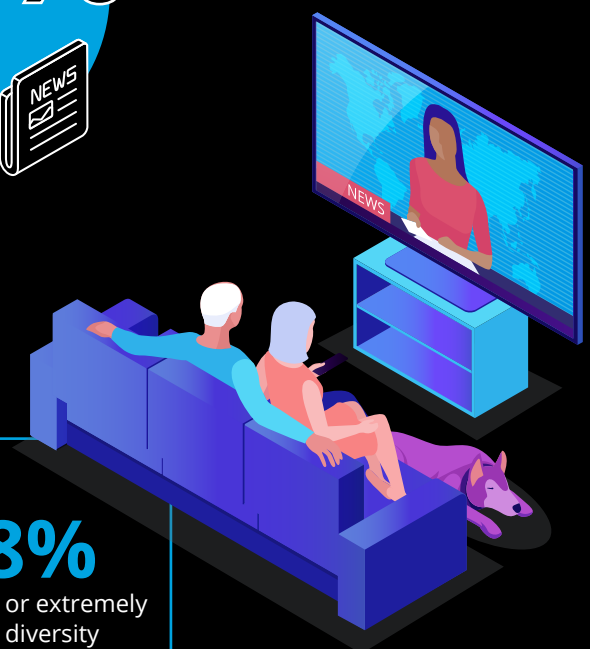
...but some remain doubtful:

17% unsure which news sources they can trust

Most have access to news with somewhat diverse tone, coverage, opinions and cultural representation:

38%
moderate diversity

18%
high or extremely high diversity



Sport

More than a game



Sport is still a major drawcard...

55%

watch sport more than one hour per week



...but less so for women:

40%

of women do not watch sport at all

Esports are taking off...

43% of sports fans watched esports in the last 12 months

11% watch at least weekly



Sport fans have deep pockets...



49%

are willing to pay at least \$20 monthly

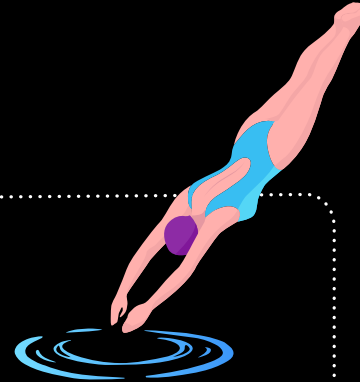
...and it features strongly in their subscription stack:

27%

have an aggregated sports subscription

4%

have a direct single sport subscription



Women's sport continues its meteoric rise...

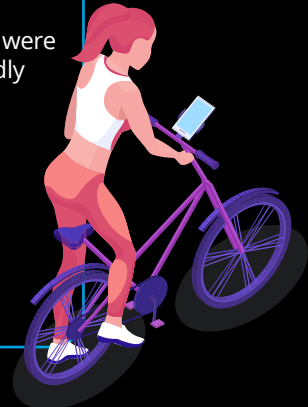
51% engage with women's sport

37% would watch more if it were advertised more broadly

...and more men than women are tuning in:

47% of men engage regularly

44% of women engage regularly



Managing the subscription juggling act: Consumers take control



The subscription stack grows

When it comes to digital entertainment, consumer choice has exploded over the past decade. The globalisation of content offerings has brought Australians more options than ever before, and seamless availability across a growing number of screens and devices has made everything accessible everywhere.

Subscription models – enabled by on-demand digital content distribution – provide access to enormous content libraries. The unbundling of content propositions to individual studios, broadcasters, publishers and other players has scattered content far and wide. In addition, lines are blurring between free and paid content, as content providers experiment with tiered models to balance commercial outcomes and audience reach, further complicating cost and access trade-off decisions. These decisions are also impacted by the increasing consumption of UGC and social platforms enabling more immersive content experiences, which puts further pressure on audience reach, commercial outcomes and trade-off decisions for media players.

SVOD (TV and movies) has been a major catalyst for trends towards paid digital subscriptions, increasing competition and more fragmented offerings. But recent consumer and market behaviours may signal there's change coming. Netflix reported its global subscriber base had fallen during the first six months of 2022¹ after more than 10 years of growth, and locally, Netflix Australia's growth stagnated for the first time since its launch in 2015.² While no single player defines the market, Netflix has been a substantial driver of disruption to date, and its rapid responses to saturation are already prompting competitors to respond with more innovative propositions within SVOD and more broadly. In addition, Netflix has announced it's introducing a new tier that includes ads from November 2022, which would likely be in high demand in Australia – 44% of consumers say they'd watch six minutes of ads per hour for a \$5-per-month SVOD subscription.

¹ Sarah Whitten, [Netflix shares crater 25% after company reports it lost subscribers for the first time in more than 10 years](#), CNBC, 19 April 2022

² Roy Morgan, [Foxtel, Disney+ and Amazon Prime Video are the big improvers for Subscription TV during 2021, but Netflix still the largest](#), 15 February 2022



The average number of **paid digital entertainment subscriptions** per household grew from...

2.3 in 2021 to **3.1** in 2022



The average number of paid digital entertainment subscriptions by generation...



Gen Z – 4.5 subscriptions



Millennials – 4.2 subscriptions



Gen X – 2.8 subscriptions



Boomers – 1.9 subscriptions



Matures – 1.6 subscriptions

Subscription saturation

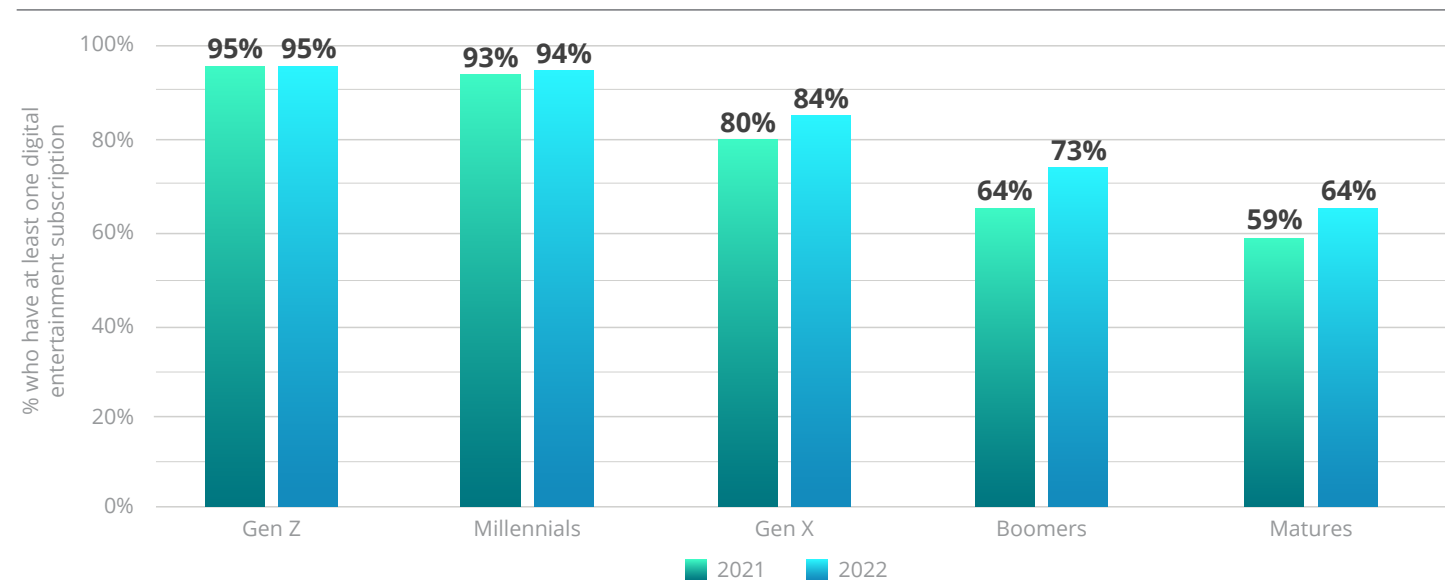
2022 has seen a modest rise in the number of households with at least one paid digital media subscription, growing to 84% in 2022 from 80% in 2021. While 2021 saw Gen Z and Millennials driving growth in digital subscription penetration, growth in 2022 has been entirely driven by the older lagging cohorts (Gen X, Boomers and Matures) with younger consumers appearing to have reached peak adoption of up to 95%.

Digital subscription penetration may be slowing, but an average of 3.1 paid digital subscriptions per household in 2022 (versus 2.3 in 2021) shows there's still impressive growth in the breadth and total number of subscriptions. This is unsurprisingly led by Gen Z and Millennials (averaging 4.5 and 4.2 subscriptions respectively) followed by the more concentrated digital media relationships of Gen X (2.8), Boomers (1.9) and Matures (1.6).

This paints a positive picture of growth for media providers, but it comes with a catch: adding subscriptions inevitably reduces the time consumers spend on each service, which has detrimental effects on relationship strength and perceived value of the service. The threat of losing customer stickiness grows as dedicated super-users become casual subscribers, challenging companies

to retain contended audiences for an extended period of time.³ If ad-based tiers do go mainstream and become a material revenue stream for SVOD providers in the future, they'll need to rethink their engagement strategy with consumers given those tiers would likely further diminish their relationship strength.

Graph 1 – Paid digital entertainment subscription (% by generation)



3 Tamsin Timpson, [Appetite for streaming content is stronger in Australia](#), KANTAR, 10 May 2022



Subscription saturation *(continued)*

SVOD continues to lead the way in paid digital subscriptions with 74% of all respondents having at least one SVOD subscription in their household, compared with 70% in 2021. This is followed by music (44% in 2022, 26% in 2021) and sport subscriptions (30% in 2022, 18% in 2021), which recorded strong growth. Pay TV (21% in 2022, 18% in 2021), gaming (5% in 2022, 6% in 2021) and news (4% in 2022 and 2021) are less prevalent. While digital subscriptions in gaming and news remain low relative to other service types, both markets are seeing continued investment to refine the value proposition and grow the customer base. Globally, publishers continue to see subscription and membership offerings as an avenue for growth: 79% of publishers surveyed by Reuters say this is a major priority, even ahead of display and native advertising. This is somewhat in contradiction to the static news subscription trend in Australia, where penetration has remained at 4% since 2021. There may be an opportunity for news providers to cross-promote SVOD services alongside their news offering in Australia, however, lessons should be learned from recent launches – such as CNN+ – that failed to gain traction in market.

Gaming subscriptions are expected to grow in the longer term on the back of social innovation, new market entrants, the rise of cloud gaming and redesigned subscription offerings that better meet unique segment needs – such as Sony's 2022 relaunch of PlayStation Plus with a range of tiers to suit casual to more dedicated gamers. In addition, technologies like VR are also enabling more immersive gaming experiences, which in turn is expected to positively impact future demand.



Subscription saturation *(continued)*

Managing subscriptions is increasingly complex for consumers as content fragments across a growing number of providers. This, alongside the growing financial burden of subscription stacking and the rise in the cost of living, are indicators the future may be precarious. Despite some of these signals, consumer demand appears favourable. Sixty-one percent of SVOD subscribers believe they will maintain at least the same number of subscriptions over the next 12 months, and a further 18% indicate they will add more. Zooming in on a generational breakdown, Gen Z – the generation with the largest number of subscriptions – are even more bullish on their future holdings, with 38% of respondents believing they'll have more subscriptions in 12 months' time. Interestingly, 63% of Gen Z said they had an 'inactive' SVOD subscription used for less than one-hour per month over the past six months. These inactive viewers are evidence of the difficulty consumers face holding multiple subscriptions in this ever-evolving media landscape and confirms customer stickiness is indeed declining.

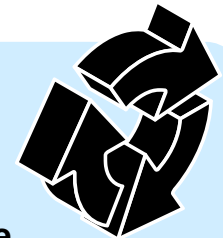
In summary, the good news is SVOD subscribers – in particular the younger demographic – are already engaged, but further strategies are required to convert passive SVOD users into more active and engaged audiences. The high occurrence of inactive SVOD subscriptions does indicate consumer friction is growing, which could result in increased switching behaviour and churn if this isn't managed appropriately.



33% added a subscription in the last six months

31% cancelled at least one subscription in the last six months

47% have made changes to subscriptions **two or more times** in the last 12 months



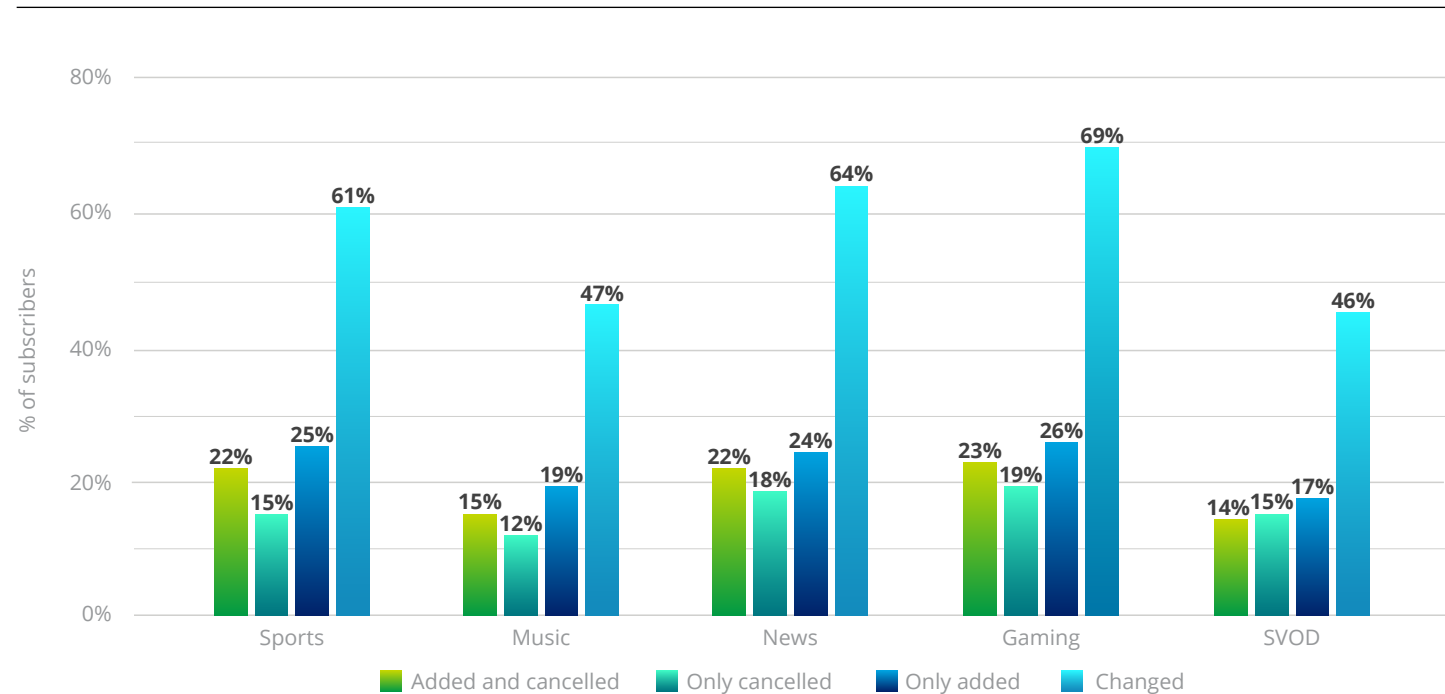
Would you like some free trials with that?



Switching behaviours across subscription types demonstrate consumers' increasingly active approach.

For SVOD, 47% of respondents either added (18%), cancelled (14%) or both cancelled and added (15%) subscriptions in the last six months. But this trend is not limited to SVOD: while subscription uptake in categories such as music and gaming have been significant year-over-year, rates of switching behaviours are even higher. A significant proportion of subscribers across sport (61%), music (41%), gaming (42%) and news (18%) added and/or cancelled a service in the last six months. High churn rates may indicate customers either perceive available subscriptions as interchangeable, or secure one-off offers from different providers throughout the year to manage budgets. Across all entertainment categories, the proportion of subscribers who added subscriptions in the last six months exceeds the proportion who cancelled. The difference is most profound in music, where 35% of respondents added subscriptions compared to 27% who cancelled.

Graph 2 - Breakdown of consumer behaviour by media type (% of respondents)



Would you like some free trials with that? *(continued)*

Though reasons for churn range from content selection to user interface, cost appears to be the leading factor. Of those who cancelled in the last six months, reducing overall SVOD spend was the most common primary motivation (37%) followed by a switch back to free-to-air TV (26%). Consumers are clearly price sensitive, with 42% indicating a price increase (including the end of an introductory offer) as one of their top three reasons for cancelling. This is problematic for the SVOD services that are offering loss-leader pricing to attract customers and are now unable to lift prices to a profitable level without losing subscribers. In addition, as societies re-emerge post-lockdowns, consumers have far more options in how to spend their time. Combined with an uncertain macro-economic outlook, this situation might be enough to disrupt the SVOD industry's historic growth. While cancellation rates to date still appear limited, it's clear consumers are making more active choices about their subscription stacks.

Although pricing drives cancellations, content is the main reason consumers stay. Getting access to first-run movies is most likely to convince people to keep a video subscription (ranked the number-one factor by 29% of respondents), while other factors such as bundled

services, loyalty programs, greater personalisation and ad-free access have less impact on cancellation decisions. Evidently, when it comes to content, a fear of missing out remains a strong behavioural driver. It could explain why plenty of subscribers across SVOD (64%), music (44%), gaming (44%), news (34%) and sport (31%) still hold one or more subscriptions they barely use. Streaming companies are clearly aware of this, heavily advertising new releases not only to attract new customers, but also to retain those who may be on the verge of cancelling. There's also a move back to drip-feed release schedules for new shows to prevent 'binge and cancel' behaviour. Seeding content snippets from these shows on social media (by both studios and fans) alongside rich and engaging conversations has also proven an effective lever to both attract and retain subscribers.

Subscribing to an entertainment service is no longer a set-and-forget decision. More consumers are moving from ad hoc subscription cancellations (undertaken by 22% of SVOD subscribers) to periodically reviewing and adjusting their choices (46%). Consequently, while most respondents (61%) expect to maintain the same total number of SVOD subscriptions over the next 12 months, the actual subscriptions in that bundle are likely to be

chopped and changed several times throughout the year. In fact, 53% of those who cancelled an SVOD subscription have changed their holdings just once, 41% make changes two to three times a year, and 6% have mastered the subscription juggle with four or more changes annually.

These behaviours are expected to increase as media aggregators and subscription-managed services bring greater visibility of total subscriptions and spend. While the value trade-off when adding or rolling over a subscription is becoming a more involved and frequent decision, the act of switching becomes easier for consumers – which highlights the need for providers to rethink how they retain consumers in the long term.



Scrimping, saving, streaming: Managing the cost of media consumption



Bingeing on a budget

Content unbundling, and the shift towards on-demand consumption, has left consumers with a near-limitless set of choices of where to spend their entertainment time.

A growing number of media organisations are investing heavily in content, product innovation and marketing to grow their subscriber bases, this continues to prove effective in convincing audiences to pay for access to the latest content. This consistent growth in subscription holdings is having a predictable impact on consumers' wallets, and early signs suggest they're increasingly feeling the pinch with 64% concerned about the cumulative cost of multiple subscriptions.



The average household now spends \$62 per month on digital entertainment services, a substantial 13% increase from \$55 in 2021. There's real pressure to reduce expenses as the average consumer now spends 13% above their target budget, which is sure to drive greater scrutiny on paid subscriptions going forward. This budget gap rises as high as 23% for Gen Z, whose households represent the largest monthly spenders of any generation at \$82. It's possible this spend growth has been buoyed by subscribers' wilful ignorance of the aggregate cost of seemingly budget-friendly \$10 subscriptions, but this appears to be changing as individuals get savvier with managing entertainment budgets. Nearly half (46%) of SVOD users now periodically review subscriptions to decide whether to keep, add to or cancel existing services.

With budgets already stretched, rising inflation and cost of living will further challenge media companies' ambitious growth aspirations and market forecasts as consumers face tough choices on entertainment. However, digital entertainment isn't first on the chopping block when consumers look to cut spend.

Nine percent of respondents placed digital media subscriptions at the top of their list when asked which categories to chop if cost cutting - well behind eating out (30%), alcohol and tobacco (27%) and groceries (12%).

Interestingly, the impact of growing up in different ages of media consumption has produced clear generational divides when it comes to devices versus content. Gen Z and Millennials would more readily cut spending on electronics than their digital entertainment bundles, while all older generations would cut entertainment subscription costs before reducing their phone, laptop and TV budgets.

64%

are concerned about the cumulative cost of having **multiple subscription services**



Subscription stacks with a side of ads

As entertainment costs rise, free alternative offerings are increasingly attractive and there's no shortage of them across all media categories.

While providers are exploring an expanding range of commercial models, 'free' still typically means ad-funded, a trade-off consumers are accustomed to making. But escaping ads is not enough of a value proposition on its own to attract audiences. Willingness to pay is more likely to be driven by exclusivity of content, user experience and universal access across devices.

The concept of paying to remove ads is borne of a digital world. Clearing ad clutter from YouTube queues or Spotify playback with the click of a 'premium subscription' button makes this a clear choice. But jumping between apps from SVOD to broadcaster video-on-demand (BVOD) presents a less tangible trade-off, and this flexibility of choice has seeded a generational divide. Gen Z are most comfortable paying for entertainment to avoid ads (64%), followed by Millennials (61%). Older generations are more receptive to ads if it's kinder on the wallet, with only 38% of Gen X and 25% of Boomers preferring to pay.

What holds true across all generations is that consumers are most willing to pay for TV and movies to avoid ads – well above music, games and news. Consumption behaviours are heavily influenced by market offerings and, for much of the past decade, the continued rise of compelling SVOD products has clearly had an impact. But change may be looming. In response to stalling growth, Netflix has announced the upcoming launch of ad-supported tiers, a move quickly followed by Disney+ and one likely to be replicated more broadly by other providers.

Consumers are most willing to engage with ads on...



43%
Television



27%
Smartphones



31%
are influenced by ads while watching video content

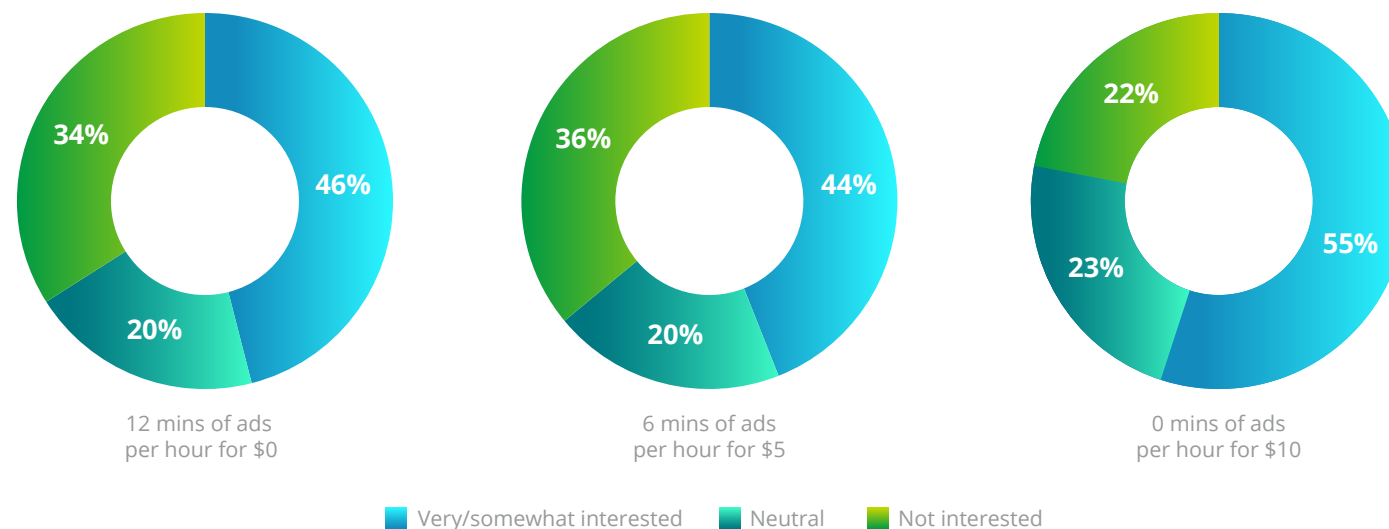


Subscription stacks with a side of ads *(continued)*

This move to ad-supported tiers makes sense as providers look to stay relevant in a sea of platforms and reduced audience stickiness. It relies on consumers' willingness to accept the proposition for the right price: 44% of respondents would be interested in watching six minutes of ads per hour for a discounted \$5 monthly subscription (roughly half the average SVOD basic subscription cost). Further, 46% would consider a free subscription with 12 minutes of ads per hour, an option that would mirror the levels of advertising seen on linear free-to-air TV.

In such a fragmented market with few truly segment-focused offerings, scale is critical. Ad-supported tiers are an effective means to counter cost-driven churn and shore up the growing number of users with dormant subscriptions. It won't, however, solve the split in audience attention across platforms nor the rising complexity in choosing what content to engage with. In fact, it's likely to do the opposite as lower prices encourage consumers to grow their subscription stack even further. This move will also narrow the distinction in audience experience between BVOD and SVOD as the core differentiation of ad-free content erodes. While the battle to retain audiences rages, there's still little in the way of unified experiences across discovery or consumption.

Graph 3 – Ad-interest for TV and movies subscriptions (% of respondents)



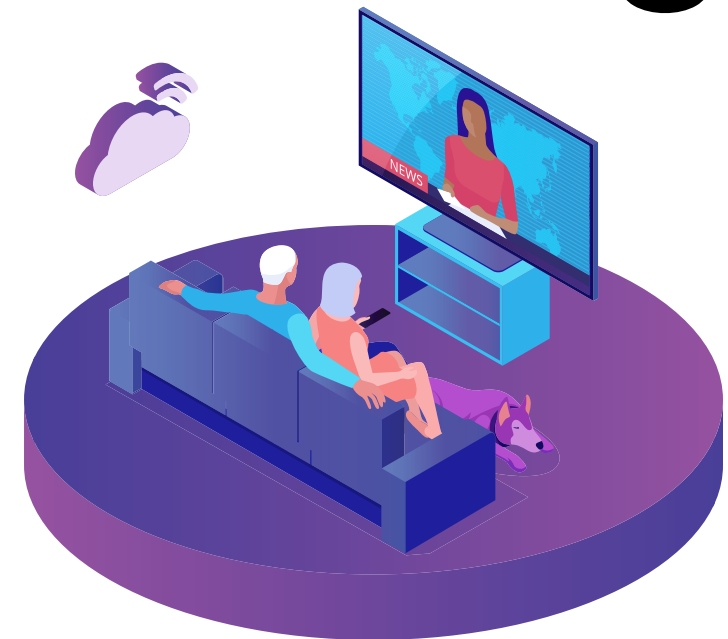
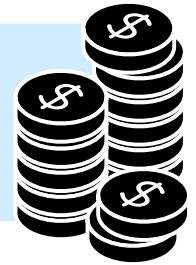
Exploring alternative models

Ad-based services aren't the only SVOD alternative available to money-conscious consumers. The scene is set for pay-per-view (PPV) to make a resurgence in the near future, with the market forecast to grow 15% annually through to 2027.⁴

As consumers are bombarded with well-funded marketing campaigns and enticing snippets of trending shows on social media, PPV could be a solution to the fear of missing out driven by the subscription barrier. In Australia, PPV is currently only half the penetration of SVOD (17% compared to 33%)⁵ but it's a segment to watch going forward. Providers continue experimenting with more fluid availability windows and purchasing options across both PPV and ad-based subscriptions, such as Disney's ever-evolving movie release windowing approach. Platforms could help retain users and reduce churn by helping consumers navigate these trade-offs with content recommendations, contextual offers and passive notifications.

Consumers are also embracing a wider range of channels and platforms for shopping, infusing purchase decisions into content consumption experiences. Media players are capitalising on this shift, using their privileged access to audiences and influential consumer networks to grow new revenue streams related to content-driven commerce. Social commerce has accelerated this transition with nearly six million Australians aged 14 or over making a purchase through social media platforms in 2021,⁶ but the opportunity to profit from this behaviour shift extends to all media organisations, particularly for publishers and digital broadcasters. Both YouTube (YouTube Shopping partnership with Shopify) and Twitter (Twitter Shops) have launched new commerce offerings in 2022, following similar e-commerce forays by TikTok and other platforms earlier in 2021. Audiences are becoming increasingly accustomed to making purchases within content streams – expanding a new realm of revenue opportunities beyond subscription and ads without diminishing the consumption experience for audiences.

Nearly **six million Australians** aged 14 or over made an online purchase through social media in 2021



4 Grand View Research, [Live Streaming Pay-Per-View Market Size, Share & Trends Analysis Report By Vertical \(Sports, Media & Entertainment, Education\), By Region \(North America, Europe, APAC, South America, MEA\), And Segment Forecasts, 2020 - 2027](#)
5 Statista, [Pay-per-View \(TVoD\) - Australia, Video Streaming \(SVoD\) - Australia](#)
6 Research and Markets, [Australia Social Commerce Market and Future Growth Databook 2022](#), April 2022

Media's next horizon: The evolving role of social, UGC and the metaverse



The push-pull effects of social media

Social media platforms have become entertainment destinations that bring content and consumer experiences to life in all its forms – video reels, live streams, articles, photos, music, games and shopping. They curate highly personalised streams of bite-sized snippets to fill a minute waiting for the bus or an hour lazing on the couch.

This unique form of passive discovery, paired with active conversation and interaction, is fuelled by consumers and creators that stitch, duet, edit and augment content trends and memes that take on a life of their own. In terms of consumption time, this evolution has positioned social as a genuine competitor to other media forms. But it's also become the ultimate complement, helping users discover, engage and sustain relationships with other content and media brands.

We spend a lot of time on socials – 40% of respondents use it for more than two hours each day. Again, the younger demographic is taking the lead – with 59% of Gen Z spending two hours or more.

And the way consumers spend time on social media is shifting. More traditional activities – browsing feeds and messaging friends – still reign supreme overall, but preferences have diversified and watching video, viewing photos and reading news are nearly as popular. Twenty-eight percent of Gen Z have video watching as their top social media activity, trailed by messaging friends (16%) and browsing feeds (12%). Gen Z also have a more diverse set of favourite activities that includes shopping, gaming and following influencers. This is no doubt driven by consumption preference, and the shift has been accelerated by the rising influence of video-based platforms like TikTok and Instagram Reels that have a strong skew towards younger generations.

Importantly, social has also educated users to both value and trust passive curation. The innovation of TikTok's 'For You' page, or FYP, has entrenched an appetite for a 'lean-back' content recommendation experience. In doing so, it's also highlighted the friction of overwhelming choice and deliberation. Consumers actively engage with likes, follows and comments in an attempt to surface and consume ever more relevant content.

Social media has its pros and cons, but it's become an undeniably pivotal player in driving content interest and discovery across the wider media ecosystem. It's likely a major reason why 14% use social media as their most frequently used source (30% of Gen Z), and 49% use it to discover content on other platforms (74% of Gen Z).

68% of respondents believe **engaging with friends and family on social media is as rewarding as engaging in real life**



Creator or consumer?

The continued surge in social media consumption is partly driven by UGC's popularity as it increasingly commands audience's viewing and creation time. More than a third of respondents watch an hour or more of UGC per day, and this is even more common for Gen Z (84%) and Millennials (60%).

By democratising content creation, platforms have unlocked a near limitless stream of content, fuelled by increasingly sophisticated and intuitive production apps that keep the content flywheel spinning. Consumption continues to evolve into a highly interactive experience as the distinction between 'creator' and 'audience' shrinks. More of us than ever are creating and sharing content on social media – 39% across all generations and 64% of Gen Z. The ability to comment on, stitch and re-configure content has become a core part of the entertainment experience for many people, and it's proving very effective at attracting audiences.

Sixty-four percent of respondents (79% of Gen Z and 73% of Millennials) agree they spend more time watching UGC than planned, and Gen Z and Millennial users are primarily finding their content through algorithm-driven recommendations. TikTok has become especially effective at surfacing content to maintain engagement. Average weekly time spent on the platform is reportedly almost double that of all other major social platforms combined,⁷ helping drive its popularity despite the relative fragmentation of preferred social apps. TikTok is the favourite social media platform for Gen Z, followed by YouTube in second place and Instagram in third. But UGC popularity is set to continue even among older generations, with a large proportion of respondents (59%) saying they're watching more UGC than six months ago.

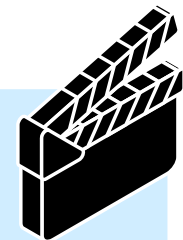
39% of respondents **create and share content**



The short-form style and lean-back experience of social media platforms and their content algorithms caters to the consumption preferences of younger demographics, with 66% of Gen Z and 57% of Millennials preferring to engage with bite-sized videos over the longer-form content offered by SVOD and free-to-air services. This preference has affected behaviour, with 73% of Gen Z and 63% of Millennials spending more time on social media platforms than streamed TV and movies. This gap between the preference for short-form UGC and longer-form scripted content is one we expect to see widen in the future, and it may also disrupt or dictate SVOD's ability to grow subscribers, audience attention and share of consumption time.

64%

of respondents spend more time **watching UGC** than planned



Welcome to the metaverse: Cutting-edge tech

When it comes to emerging media developments like the metaverse, blockchain, non-fungible tokens (NFTs) and cryptocurrency, interest is high – but adoption, and understanding, remain low.

These technologies present enormous potential for brand new entertainment experiences and innovation in the ways we find, distribute, share, own and consume media content. Media players have begun to experiment with all these capabilities, but the timeline for mass adoption is far from clear. Shifting consumption habits towards a drastically new media type will take time, especially when considering the wider set of dependencies on technologies like artificial intelligence, quantum computing, augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) required to power the metaverse.

Only 26%

of respondents have **engaged with the metaverse** in some capacity



Interest in the metaverse is unsurprisingly driven by younger generations. Fifty-eight percent of Gen Z and 49% of Millennials know what it is and are interested in it, compared to just 10% of Boomers and 8% of Matures. Facebook's re-brand to Meta elevated the concept of the metaverse to the public, but early forays into this new age of engagement are still embryonic and early adopters are all too aware of current limitations impacting the richness of the experience. Only 26% of people report they've actually engaged with the metaverse in some capacity, 13% with a VR or AR device and 13% without.

Even so, there's no lack of interest in the concepts and technology surrounding the metaverse, particularly for the prospect of truly immersive digital entertainment events. For instance, 33% of Gen Z and 30% of Millennials reported they've attended a live entertainment event in virtual reality, presenting interesting implications for the way consumers will interact with media and entertainment in the future. The development of virtual environments such as concert venues, theme parks, sporting arenas or casinos will truly integrate the breadth of entertainment experiences in a similar vein to the role social media platforms played in integrating music, video, stories and shopping into a single stream.

Decentralised technologies underpinning the metaverse, including but not limited to blockchain, NFTs and Web 3.0, could also redefine the ways audiences and media organisations interact. This transition could enable micropayments for content, open access to distributed content without the need for aggregators, integrated global intellectual property and rights management, and advanced monetisation of person-to-person content sharing. Media players are in the early stages of experimentation, particularly in the transition of NFTs from content to utility: many artists and musicians are minting tokens as tickets to events and experiences in the metaverse and beyond. We're in the early days of this evolution, but the media landscape is poised to rapidly accelerate the democratisation of content creation, distribution and monetisation in the age of the metaverse.



Balancing media content: The trust and influence equation



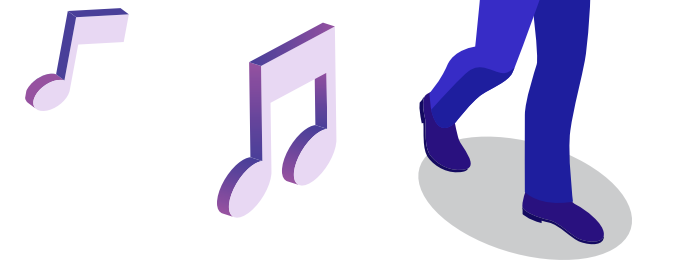
What influences us?

Social media engagement has significantly amplified the media's influence on the public. But as this influence grows, so too does the importance of trust.

The intersection of UGC and traditional media on social platforms has created trends in consumer thought that have a tangible impact on behaviour. More than ever, media publishers' impact expands well beyond their own ecosystems, creating highly engaged fan communities across a diverse range of platforms, often owned by other commercial organisations. The stratospheric rise of Kate Bush's 'Running Up that Hill' is a clear example. The song rocketed to number one on the Billboard Global 200 chart this year, a full 28 years after its release,⁸ after being featured in an episode of the Netflix series *Stranger Things*. This amplified impact on consumer behaviour goes well beyond music streaming. Chess.com reported that after the release of *The Queen's Gambit* in October 2021, new players surged from an average of 6,000 a day in the month prior, to 30,000 on the days following.⁹ The sale of chess sets and accessories also increased 215% on eBay in the month following the show's release.¹⁰

The intersection of traditional media and UGC raises interesting questions about media ownership, particularly around intellectual property rights. UGC is typically seen as fan tribute, but when fans monetise these tributes, it starts to look like an infringement of the media publisher's intellectual property rights. Recently, Netflix drew the line regarding the fan-produced work *The Unofficial Bridgerton Musical*, suing creators Barlow and Bear for copyright infringement when they embarked on a live world tour. The pair rose to viral fame on TikTok by creating a series of songs inspired by the TV series *Bridgerton*. The proposed world tour came a year after the creators released a Grammy award-winning album featuring all fifteen songs originally published on TikTok. The matter was settled in September 2022.¹¹ While social media engagement can be a great source of publicity for a media organisation's projects, there's clearly much to be defined in the relationship between these companies and the content creators on social platforms.

It's evident media organisations have significant influence on society, but how do Australians perceive that influence? One-third of our respondents indicated they felt media companies have an overwhelmingly positive impact on society. Older respondents are more sceptical overall: TV broadcasters and major publishers are the only media organisations perceived as having a largely positive influence by more than 20% of Boomers and Matures. Younger respondents are much more supportive of social media's impact, with 56% of Gen Z indicating it has a largely positive impact. This support is extended to individual content creators, such as podcast producers, who are seen as having a positive impact by 55% of Gen Z. This more positive view of social media and content creators is reflected in Gen Z's news preferences and their perceptions of the trustworthiness of different sources.



8 Gary Trust, [Kate Bush's 'Running Up That Hill' tops both billboard global charts](#), Billboard, 11 July 2022
9 Miranda Bryant, ['It's electrifying': chess world hails Queen's Gambit-fuelled boom](#), The Guardian, 29 November 2020
10 IBID
11 Gene Maddaus, [Netflix settles copyright lawsuit over 'Unofficial Bridgerton Musical'](#), Variety, 23 September 2022

What news do we value?

There's a clear generational divide in the way Australians define and consume news. Overall, we're choosing to stay informed about news and current affairs with only 6% of survey respondents indicating they don't follow the news. TV news is by far the most popular: 64% of respondents ranked it as one of their top three most frequently used news sources.

Despite the overall preference for TV news, a different story is emerging with younger audiences. New media entrants are successfully capturing their attention by engaging with them on social platforms, the preferred source of news for respondents under 40. Seventy-six percent of Gen Z indicated they use social media as their main source for news and current affairs. Instagram-based publisher The Daily Aus has grown its audience from 100,000 followers to 390,000 over the past year by creating posts and reels that deliver independent journalism on the issues young people care about.¹² While the idea of posting news content on social media isn't revolutionary, social-first publishers are unlocking

exponential growth through their use of truly multimedia content and their understanding that a one-size-fits-all content strategy does not function in today's social media landscape – one defined by the unique formats, audiences and content types that users connect with.

Traditional publishers have also used social media effectively to reach younger audiences. The Washington Post has been growing its audience on TikTok, the most popular social platform among Gen Z respondents. The company has amassed 1.4 million followers and more than 60 million likes across its channel by publishing news content in satirical or comedic skits inspired by topical trends on the platform. Effectively harnessing trends before they pass is key to their success, but a challenge given the condensed trend cycles on the app. Publishers that continue to post static content that's not tailored to the unique format and audience of each platform will limit their ability to capitalise on the unique opportunities of these channels. Social media's popularity as a platform for news is undeniable, but whether followers can be translated into paying subscribers is another story.

When it comes to paying for news, older Australians are significantly more open to the idea. Thirteen percent of Matures have a paid news subscription, and their churn rate is comparatively low with 91% reporting they had neither added nor cancelled news subscriptions in the last six months. Aside from Gen Z, all generations ranked the perceived trustworthiness of content as the primary reason they'd pay for news, closely followed by the perceived quality of content. For Gen Z, ease of access reigns with 89% indicating this is an important factor for them.

Australians **most value** the perceived trustworthiness of content

82%



12 Laura Schofield, [The startup delivering news that matters to young people](#), Newsworthy, 10 November 2021

What and who do we trust?

Australians are largely aligned in the value they place on finding trustworthy news sources. How we verify the trustworthiness of the news we consume is where generational divides begin to reappear.

Older Australians see traditional news publishers (covering established major news producers, regional publications, and industry or expert bodies) as inherently more trustworthy than UGC or news published on social media. Younger Australians are significantly more trusting of UGC, with 46% of Gen Z and 45% of Millennials rating this content as moderately trustworthy – compared to 27% of Boomers.

Respondents would prefer to engage with a news ecosystem made up of a diverse range of reputable media outlets willing to engage with each other to back up the validity of their reporting. When asked what would increase their perception of a news source's trustworthiness, respondents are again divided by age. Forty-six percent of Gen Z placed links to other reputable journals or articles among the five top factors; Gen X looks for in-depth reporting (11%) or trust in the publisher's brand (11%) as their primary factor for increasing trust. While 13% of Gen Z felt links to fact-checking websites make them more confident in a source's trustworthiness, this was capped to 6% across other generations.¹³

Diversity of reporting is another clear priority for respondents. Forty-three percent indicated they felt the diversity of a publisher's reporting reflected on its trustworthiness, with an increase in diversity suggesting a publisher is more trustworthy. Further, diversity of perspectives was the third most selected factor driving willingness to pay for news. While Australians are clearly looking for diversity of opinion and thought, they don't feel they're finding it. Only 5% of respondents felt the publishers they have access to offer a wide range of perspectives, with the majority (38%) believing they see a moderate range of perspectives across the news publishers they frequented.



51%

see major publishers driving **positive social change**



75%

consider major news publishers trustworthy

vs

43%

for social media



¹³ See publications including [The Washington Post's Fact Checker](#), [The ABC and RMIT's Fact Check](#), and [The Poynter Institute's Politifact](#)

Sport: More than just a game



Sport's post-pandemic recovery

The post-pandemic return of sport in 2021, marked by a return to live games and the delayed Tokyo Olympics, saw it compete for audience attention with entertainment alternatives flourishing in its absence.

Despite this competition, 30% of households have a sport subscription in 2022, a significant increase from 2021 (18%) largely driven by aggregated subscriptions, such as Optus Sport and Kayo. However, two-thirds of respondents now spend 10% or less of their total viewing time on sports and a significant share (27%) don't watch sports at all, which is partly the result of social media platforms' stickiness.

In terms of consumption hours, sport has stayed largely consistent across generations. That said, older fans are the most committed with 18% of Boomers and 26% of Matures watching six-plus hours of sport per week, compared to less than 13% across the younger generations. Live sport is primarily consumed on TV (77%) and at home (91%), and mostly with friends and family (57%).

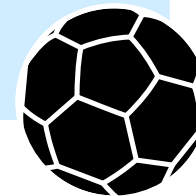
Sport appears to be the category where the traditional viewing experience – gathering around a TV and watching live – remains the same, which could explain some of the declining viewership and reflect under-exploited opportunities for more innovative sports experiences.

While live sports viewing looks similar to ten years ago, engagement is now far broader than live games. Audiences are increasingly tuning in to on-demand viewing, highlights clips, panel shows, online commentary, documentaries and athletes' social media, and the adjacent industries of sports wagering, fantasy and esports are flourishing. A third of sports watchers ranked these other content types as the sports content they prefer engaging with, ahead of live coverage.

These drivers of audience engagement are consistent between sports and broader media trends, at least for younger generations. Gen Z and Millennials are engaging with new sports and spending more time with existing favourites because of the media they consume beyond matches themselves, such as documentaries, panel shows and, most significantly, social media.

Eighteen percent of sports watchers (39% of Gen Z) now engage with new sports they didn't previously follow thanks to sports/athletes' social media content and 17% (31% for Gen Z) because of sport documentaries. Documentaries such as *Drive to Survive*, *Cheer* and *The Last Dance* proving enormous hits for SVOD services and creating new fans for the sports they follow.

26%
of Matures watch **six-plus hours**
of sport per week, compared to...
13%
across younger generations



Sport – (still) a man’s world?

The gender divide remains in place for sports consumption. For women, 40% don't watch any sports content compared to only 14% of men.

Interestingly, men are slightly more engaged in women's sport (47% of men regularly engage) than women (44%), to the point that two-thirds of women's sport viewers are male.¹⁴ A large group of respondents (37%) say they would watch more women's sport if advertised more broadly, and an equal proportion would watch more if more content was available. Broadcasters are banking on this 'if you build it, they will come' approach, pouring resources into coverage of big-ticket events such as AFLW, NRLW and WBBL finals.

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Contacts

Authors



Leora Nevezie
Partner – Consulting

National Customer
Strategy & Design Leader
inevezie@deloitte.com.au



Jeremy Smith
Director – Consulting

National Media & Entertainment
Leader
jeremsmith@deloitte.com.au



Peter Corbett
Partner – Consulting

National Telecommunications
Leader
pcorbett@deloitte.com.au



Thom Greving
Senior Manager – Consulting

thgreving@deloitte.com.au

Contributors

Jacob Herman
Senior Consultant – Consulting

Kate Slater
Consultant – Consulting

Dan Manolios-Reichert
Consultant – Consulting

Andrew Miller
**Editor – Marketing &
Business Development**

Caru Froneman
**Consultant – Marketing
& Business Development**

Sarah Lynch
**Senior Manager – Marketing
& Business Development**

The Agency, Deloitte Australia
Design

General

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related insights from Deloitte, visit:
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Contacts

Deloitte Sector Leaders

Will Castles

Partner – Consulting

National Tech, Media &
Telco Industry Leader

wcastles@deloitte.com.au

Jeremy Smith

Director – Consulting

National Media &
Entertainment Leader

jeresmith@deloitte.com.au

Bec McConnochie

Partner – Consulting

National Technology Leader

bmccconnochie@deloitte.com.au

Deloitte Telecommunications, Media and Entertainment Business Contacts

Peter Corbett

Partner – Consulting

pcorbett@deloitte.com.au

Kat McMaster

Partner – Financial Advisory

kmcmaster@deloitte.com.au

John O'Mahony

Partner – Deloitte Access Economics

joomahony@deloitte.com.au

Sandeep Chadha

Partner – Audit & Advisory

sachadha@deloitte.com.au

Joshua Tanchel

Partner – Deloitte Private

jtanchel@deloitte.com.au

Neil Pereira

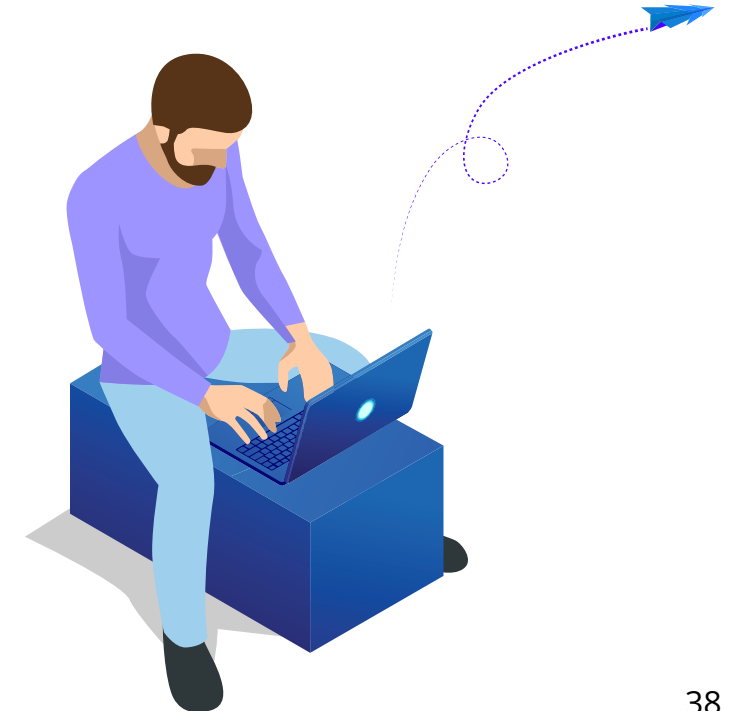
Partner – Tax & Legal

npereira@deloitte.com.au

Mark Pedley

Partner – Risk Advisory

mapedley@deloitte.com.au





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