



Exploring Youth Online News Experiences

Limor Peer, PhD

Media Management Center

IMMAA annual meeting

July 2, 2007





Engagement with media: What we know so far

- Engagement is multi-dimensional
- Predicts usage
- Affects advertising



“Connects me with others”

Consumer statements:

- I'm as interested in input from other users as I am in the regular content on this site
- A big reason I like this site is what I get from other users
- This site does a good job of getting its visitors to contribute or provide feedback
- I'd like to meet other people who regularly visit this site
- I've gotten interested in things I otherwise wouldn't have because of this site
- Overall, the visitors to this site are pretty knowledgeable about the topics it covers

22 Online User Experiences

1. Entertains, absorbs me
2. Looks out for people like me
3. Regular part of my day
4. My personal timeout
5. A credible, safe place
6. Connects me with others
7. Touches me & expands my views
8. Makes me smarter
9. Turned on by ads
10. Easy to use
11. Helps & improves me
12. Worth saving & sharing
13. Tailored for me
14. Guides me to other media
15. Makes me feel I belong
16. A way to fill my time
17. Something to talk about
18. My guilty pleasure
19. Tries to persuade me
20. Too much
21. Worries me
22. Annoyed by the ads



Engagement and usage

1. Entertains and absorbs me (0.637)
2. Looks out for people like me (0.619)
3. Regular part of my day (0.606)
4. My personal timeout (0.560)
5. A credible, safe place (0.547)
6. Connects me with others (0.544)
7. Touches me & expands my views (0.532)
8. Makes me smarter (0.500)
9. Turned on by ads (0.497)
10. Easy to use (0.491)

Engagement and usage – News sites only*

1. Regular part of my day
2. My personal timeout
3. Entertains, absorbs me
4. Tailored for me
5. Makes me smarter
6. Something to talk about
7. A way to fill my time
8. Guides me to other media
9. Touches me and expands my views
10. Looks out for people like me

Not on the list...

- A credible, safe place
- Connects me with others
- Easy to use
- Turned on by ads

* Results from additional proprietary research with 11 U.S. news sites

A vertical column of four colored squares: grey, green, purple, and red.

Youth Online News Experiences: Research questions

Focusing on sites that provide news...

1. Where do teens get news online?
2. How do teens engage with news online?
3. What are the characteristics of a Web site that leads people to feel that it, for example, looks out for their interest? Or that it gives them something to talk about?

Method:

Exploratory qualitative study

n=65 Teens

- Age 14-18
- From the Chicago area
- 60% female
- 71% Caucasian, 7% African American, 8% Hispanic/Latino, 14% multi-racial
- Screened for getting some news online
- Focus groups with 17 teens (pre...)
- Hour-long semi-structured one-on-one interviews with 48 teens

Method: cont'd

Semi-structured interviews:

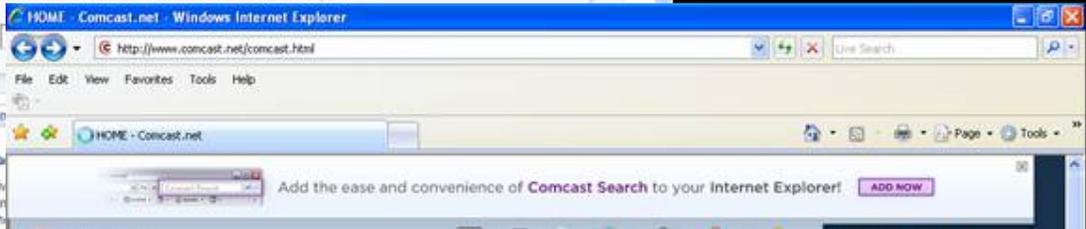
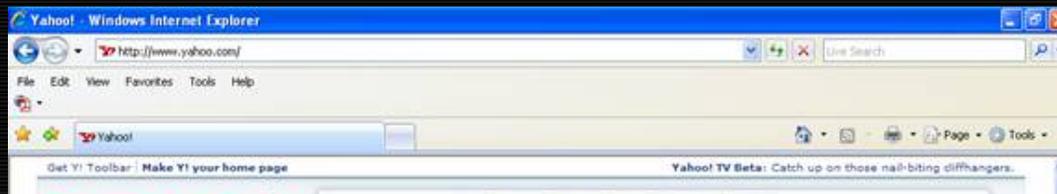
- Part 1 – decide on site, general Qs
- Part 2 – explore experiences
 - Rate statement (1-10)
 - E.g., “This often gives me things to talk about with my friends or family,” “This makes me feel safe”
 - If higher than 5, ask to elaborate on the experience in own words and on what in the site creates it
 - Ask to provide examples and capture screen shots



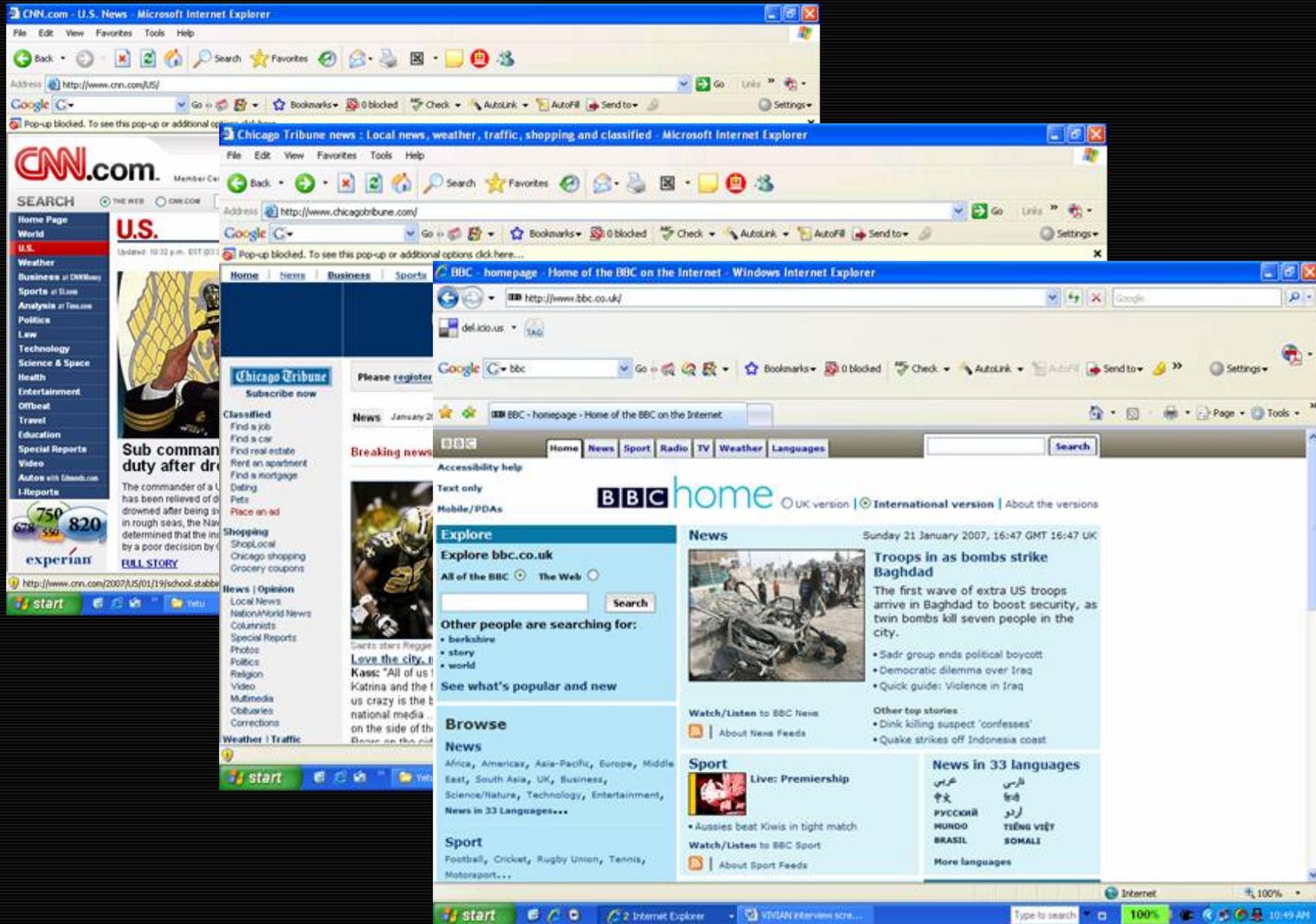
Where do teens get news online?

- Internet portals
(including Comcast, AOL, Yahoo)
- General TV news
- Local newspapers
- Sports

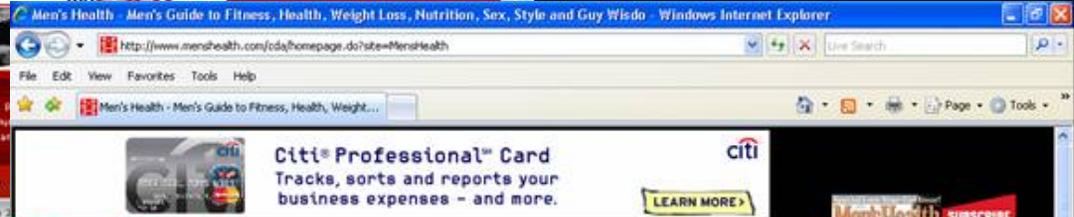
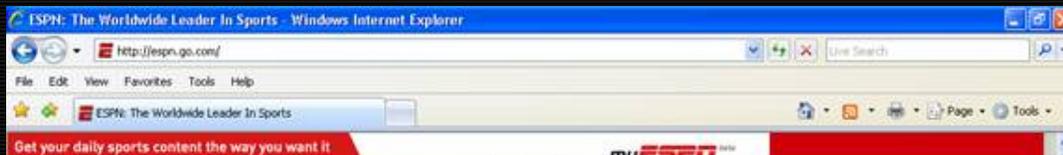
Portals



"Traditional" news organizations



Special interest





News isn't at the top

- Top online activity: communicating with friends
- We often heard...

“I won't go out of my way to get news, but if something catches my eye, I'll click on it”

If it catches my eye...



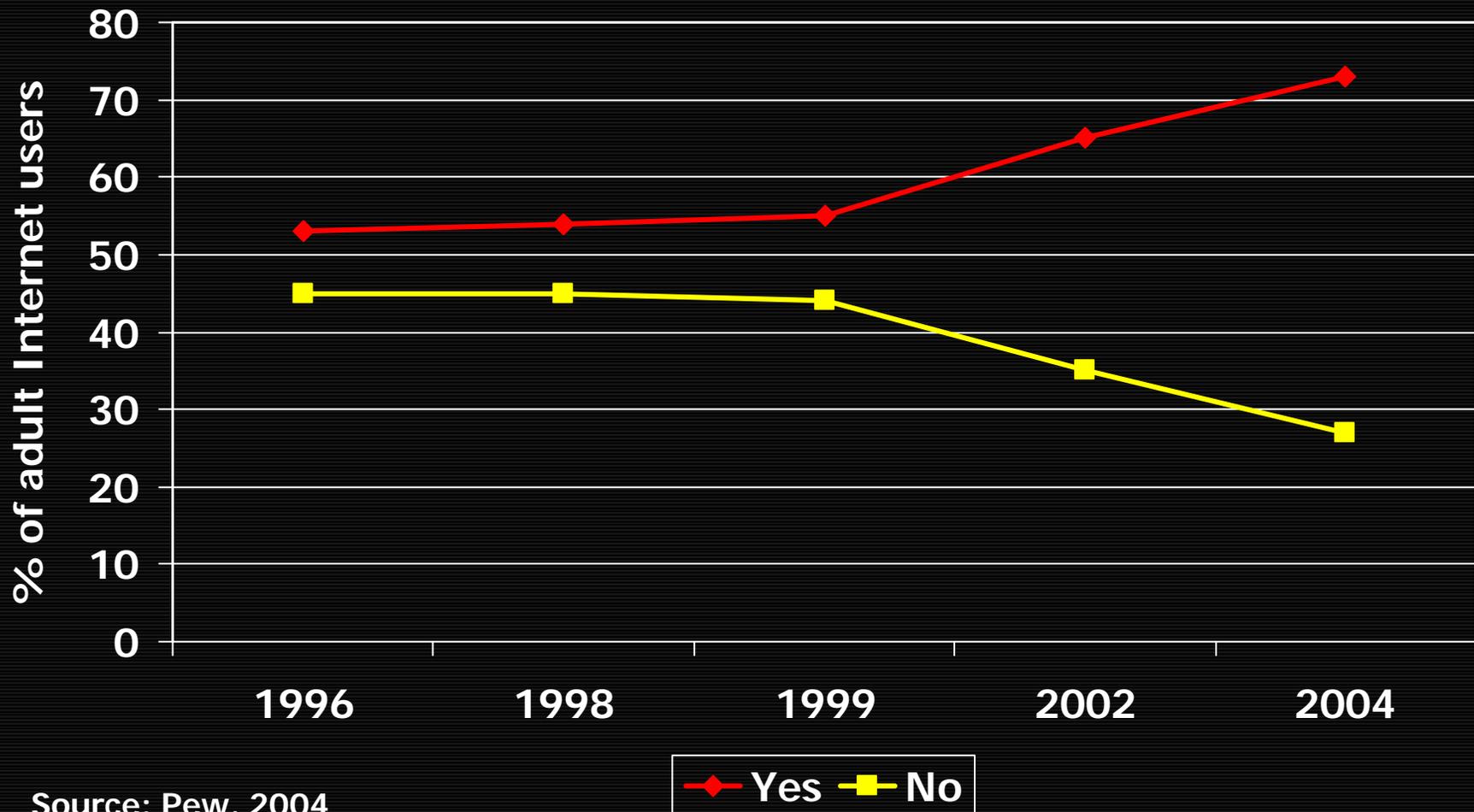


What often catches their eye

- Topics of specific interest
 - Music
 - Sports
 - Celebrities
 - Science, anarchy, a favorite band...
- Features
 - Pictures
 - Videos
- Humor
 - Funny stories
 - Odd stories
 - Offbeat stories
 - News of the weird
 - Humor about the news and people in it

Bumping into news online

Q: When you go online, do you ever come across news when you may have been going online for a purpose other than to get the news?



Source: Pew, 2004



Exploring key experiences

- My personal time out
- Gives me something to talk about
- Easy to use
- A credible, safe place

My personal time out



News sites are not a treat*

because news itself is not a treat

- It reminds them of the world's problems
- It makes them think, which isn't relaxing
- It stresses them out

*(Except for a few)

Something to talk about





Something to talk about...

- With friends
 - With adults
 - For school
 - Part of who they're becoming
 - Obligation
-
- Big "N" news = school, obligation, or eye catching
 - Small "n" news = topic / interest driven

Easy to use



For teens, easy to use means...

- Automatic

“Things just pop up...All I have to do is click and read”

- Comprehensive

Variety of subjects and functions

“Everything is there...No need to go anywhere else”

- Quick

Instant answers, short articles, not much work

- A great gateway

Can go anywhere they want from here, good search

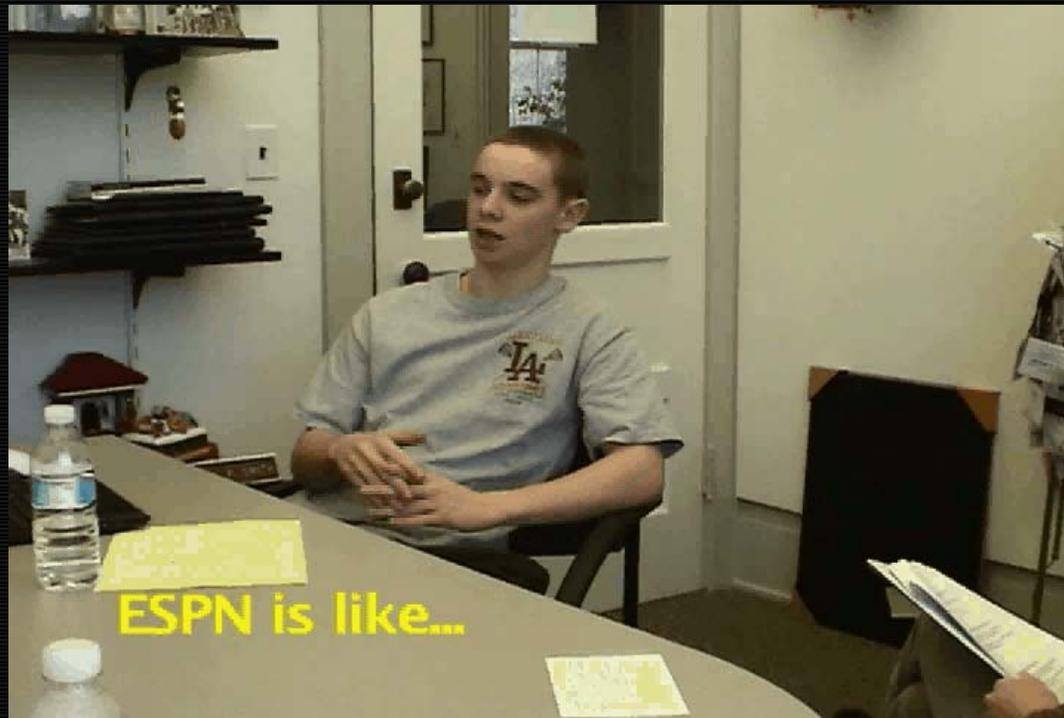
- Facilitates multi-tasking

Can look at news while IMing or listening to music or doing homework or MySpace

- Clear

Organization makes intuitive sense

Credible, safe place



A vertical stack of three colored squares: a grey square at the top, a dark green square in the middle, and a purple square at the bottom.

What makes a site credible

- Size
- Brand
- Recommendations
- Checks out
- Fact, not opinion
- Easy to tell ads from editorial



Engagement: Main findings

- Teens see the “News” as an alienating and depressing subject to be avoided online (when they’re there to do fun stuff or check news about topics of interest such as music, sports, and entertainment).
- One of the strongest experiences with online news is “gives me something to talk about.”
- Convenience (and ease of use) is a strong experience for teens, one that drives their usage to a large extent.
- Teens’ experience of trust and credibility is very strong for news sites.



Implications

- Strategy:
 - How can traditional news organizations aggregate a teen audience?
 - What should be the role of news organizations online – a destination or a hub?
- Given teens' relatively low interest in news, their seeming satisfaction with the big news aggregators, the absence of local news sites from most of their radar screens, can traditional news sites even hope to compete for their attention? If so, how?

A vertical stack of three colored squares: a grey square at the top, a dark green square in the middle, and a purple square at the bottom.

A teen audience aggregation strategy

- Make “catches my eye” the center of a new teen audience aggregation strategy. Let it shape:
 - Content
 - Presentation
 - Marketing

A teen audience aggregation strategy (cont.)

- Go wherever their eyes are, catch them and bring them home to you
- Trump the aggregators and offer teen local to the max
- Partner with the schools
- Reward teens who like being in the know
- Diminish their angst



More implications

- Research: on teens
 - Validate: Are experiences really different for this age group?
 - What are the features and characteristics that lead to certain experiences?
- Research: on definition of news
 - What is news?



Exploring Youth Online News Experiences

Limor Peer, PhD

l-peer@northwestern.edu

