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MyNews – Uses of the News Media in Daily Life

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Executive Summary

The MyNews project focused on the use of news by exploring how people follow and share news, and what are their interests and motivations in regard to different news content and news media. The research data consists of 24 media diaries and 12 research interviews conducted with the diarists.

The aim of the study was to explore the use of news in the contexts of daily life, including the spreading, modifying and developing news material by the users, especially in social media. Focusing on uses and spreading of news forms knowledge on users' media practices and roles taken in relation to news media. Despite the changes in the media environment in general, the news media is still consumed actively. Our starting point is that news media structure in many ways people's media day which our research data also confirmed.

Methodologically the project is qualitative audience research using structured media diaries and complementing user interviews as research data.

The main research questions were:

- How news spread? How they are shared, forwarded and commented by users both online and offline?
- From what kind of positions and roles people relate to news in their daily life?

Key findings:

- News following is a habit, as also earlier research has suggested. For some of our informants consuming the news is almost an addiction: they need to know what is happening in the world, and so they follow the news flow continuously via different news media.
- There was few, if any, non-user of news media. However, the informants gave a lot of examples of non-using and giving up certain news media, due to disliking or changes in their life situation.
- Similarly than in other research on journalism, also the MyNews research revealed critical attitudes towards news journalism. The informants mostly trusted regional and local news journalism, but attitudes towards television and internet as news media were more sceptical.
- News still spread mostly in face-to-face discussions with family and friends, and at work among colleagues. The informants do not share news that much in the Net though they face shared news regularly in Facebook. The news sharing sites were used only in small extent.
- Changes in news media use occur mostly because of a life change, such as retiring, having children or starting a new job. The informants were somewhat willing to pay for news content if the payment remains reasonably small and easy to make, and if the content adds some extra on the daily news content.

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2 List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

F	female (in research interviews quotes)
M	male (in research interview quotes)

3 Introduction

The news has been described as a wallpaper of daily life, or a ritualistic mass in which people attend. Following the news is a habit that serves our information needs, and by telling us ‘what is new’ the news actually provides us with the comforting knowledge that nothing has changed and life goes on.

What are the situations where this wallpaper in the background makes us aware of its existence and draws our attention? From the journalism point of view there are the news criteria and the ability of the journalism to provide the audience with relevant information. Lately cultural studies have focused on the news audiences: it is their identities, experiences and world views forming the context in which the news are consumed and valued.

Despite the changes in the media environment, the news are still used and appreciated. It is difficult to find a person who is not following the news media at all. The use of different media may, however, vary a great deal depending on the features and preferences of the user. The age is usually an important category when it comes to media use, but also life situations and other factors may play an important role.

News material is present in daily life in many different ways: it is not just followed but also browsed, shared and forwarded, commented and modified for instance by adding information or irony. News content is information, raw material, entertainment for users, it is also non-used, skipped or criticized in different media. In the MyNews research we wanted to approach the daily contexts of news use and find out how the news media structure people’s media day.

In order to get information of people’s ways of using the news in their own environments, we used news media diaries and research interviews as data collection methods. The research data was collected during April and May 2012 by two researchers. The interviews were done after the media diaries were collected in order to complement the media diary data and increase the understanding of respondents’ use of news media. The results of the news media diaries are reported earlier (see MyNews deliverable 2.2.3.3).

3.1 Methods and data

3.1.1 The interviews

We interviewed 12 persons out of the 24 media diarists (see chapter 4.2.1). Most of the interviews took place at the home of the interviewee, a couple of interviews were made in a public place such as cafeteria or lunch restaurant according the wish of the interviewee. There were two elderly couples interviewed, and one couple wished to attend the same interview, interestingly the other couple wanted specifically to be interviewed separately.

Among the interviewees there were 6 persons from the oldest age group (60+ years) and 6 interviewees from the youngest group (25-34 years). The life situations varied in both groups, there were retired, working and unemployed informants, informants with adult children, with little kids and without children, married and living alone.

The interviewees were selected mostly based on their own willingness: In the media diaries the informants could choose to participate in the interview and suggest a time that would suit them.

When asked about their media use people usually start answering by talking about their daily routines. (Martin 2008). This way we got information about the use of news in general in comparison to the detailed information on certain news days summarized in the media diaries. In addition, they were asked questions about social use of the news i.e. sharing the news with others. (See Appendix 1 for the questions.)

The interviewees also had a chance to evaluate the experience of filling the media diaries and share their thoughts on what they actually consider as a piece of news. This is relevant especially for young people who live in a totally new news media environment and do not necessarily share the traditional definition of 'what is news'. Furthermore, within the changes the internet has brought along by allowing us to become news producers (Jenkins 2006), there is not a clear agreement on what news is. (Bird 2001)

3.1.2 The news media diaries

Out of the total 24 participants, there were 14 female and 10 male diarists reporting their media use. Their age varied between 25 and 69 years. We started searching for the diarists based on three age categories (25-34 yrs; 35-45 yrs; and so called active elderly, 59-69 yrs) but within these categories the emphasis was in finding people living in different kind of situations. Among the diarists there were people working full time as well as off from work due to unemployment, retirement or maternity leave. There were people living in different cities (Helsinki, Hyvinkää, Tampere and the cities in Tampere region, Kokkola, and Varkaus) as well as some living in the countryside. One of the diarists is not Finnish but has been living in Finland for several years. Most of the diarists are well-educated and middle-income.

In the table 1 the informants are divided in the groups according to gender and age. There were no interviews made in the middle age group partly because we wanted to gather the experiences of the young and the elderly, and partly because the busy 'thirty-somethings' showed no interest in taking part in the interviews. Women in the youngest age group were most willing to participate whereas it was more difficult to find young adult or adult men to take part in the research.

Table 1 Informants' Gender and Age

Gender	Age 25-34		Age 35-43	Age 59-69	
	Diarists	Interviewees		Diarists	Interviewees
Female	8	4	3	3	2
Male	3	2	2	5	4
Total	11	6	5	8	6

In the MyNews project, both diaries and interviews were mapping the use of news but in different ways. The diaries focused on actual use of news on certain week days and hence the diarists reported the news media and news they followed and shared on those days in detail. Though there were open questions in which diarists were asked to describe their use of news in general in the form, and despite they also had to clarify how the days reported in the diary were possibly different than normal week days, the diaries still described the news usage on certain days whereas the interviews explored more deeply the habits and the motivations and reasons behind the news consumption of the interviewees.

For data gathering, the diarists were divided into two groups. First group filled their news diary from Wed 14th to Sat 17th of March 2012 and the second group from Sun 18th to Wed 21st of March. Hence, both groups filled their diaries for 4 days which included one day during the weekend.

The media diary form designed for the research ended up being rather long. We wanted to give people a chance to describe their media use with their own words by adding open questions in the form. Many of the diarists also made use of this possibility by filling the space provided and giving information on their use of news in detail. Then again, some other diarists used considerably less words, so the dedication of the diarists varied quite a lot throughout the data.

Knowing that the form was going to be laborious for the diarists we decided to divide different tasks for different weekdays so that the diarists could report their use of news on one day and their sharing of news on another day instead of asking them to report all their news-related activities within all the four days. This way we wanted to minimize the dropping-off from the project and improve the quality of the diaries. Out of the 26 diaries sent 24 diaries were returned.

3.1.3 Media Diaries Results in brief

This report mainly presents the results of the MyNews research interviews, the results of the media diaries are reported earlier. However, the main outcomes of the news media diaries are summarized briefly here.

Traditional media, i.e. newspapers, television and the radio, were the most followed during the research period. Especially among the eldest diarists the habitual use of these news media was evident: they were reading the morning newspaper and following the news on certain hours on television and on the radio. However, among the younger diarists the newspaper was seen as a luxury, the news media that was used when extra time was available. Following the news in the two youngest groups of the informants can thus be understood with a

metaphor of news flow: the news were followed continuously throughout the day from different media with the idea that it is important to keep up knowing what is going on by reading headlines and short pieces of news with mobile devices and in online news sites.

However, commenting of the news on online news sites was rare among the diarists – at least during the research period. Some diarists shared the news stories in Facebook, but most of the news sharing took place offline, in daily discussions with family members, friends and work mates. The reasons for sharing followed the news criteria of journalism: the news stories that were shared the most were considered interesting, important and starters for a debate. This goes along with the topics that were mentioned in the diaries as the news followed: the diarists mostly listed political and societal issues, shocking events such as accidents, and other ‘serious’ news. This naturally has to do with the definition of news: even though the diarists were asked to understand the concept of news widely, only few listed entertainment and other ‘lighter’ issues in their diaries. Furthermore, in audience research it is common that people are presenting their media use in a light that makes them look like enlightened media consumers using mostly socially valued quality media.

In the next chapter we make a brief summary of the recent research on news audiences and on the media use of young people. The reporting of the results of the MyNews project is divided in three parts: First, we present the different user-types, and the identities and experiences of their daily life that affect the ways of using the news media. Secondly, we discuss social use of the news media i.e. how news spread among the users. Thirdly, we focus on the changes in the news media use and the thoughts and wishes the informants have for the news and the news media. Finally, in the last chapter we conclude with the key findings of the research.

4 Audience Research on the News

The use and reception of the news has not been studied in extend, which is surprising since we learn so much of the world we live in via the news. (Bird 2011) Especially since the 1990s, much of the audience studies have focused on entertainment media, and news media audience research has been scarce, in particular in journalism studies. (Bird 2011; Ridell 2010, Martin 2008) The research on news media has in recent decades targeted much on television news both in Finland and abroad. (E.g. Pietilä 1995, Ridell 1998, Morley 1980)

In the research conducted on audience reception of news, news usage has usually seen having either information-gathering (i.e. communicative) or ritualistic function. (Carey 1992) These two ways of use exist in tension in our daily life. Martin (2008) suggest, however, that there are “loops of interest” in our engagement with news: When we become aware of news this increased awareness also adds the relevance of the news for us, which leads to even more increased awareness and further cycles of attending to the news. This process initiates from the contexts of our interpersonal relationships, structural situations and the content

of news. The process is driven also by our cultural identities, among them race, gender, and political affiliation. (Martin 2008)

S. Elizabeth Bird (2011) emphasizes the nature of the news as a *process*, not a mere text. According to her observations, people find it difficult to talk about a specific [news - AH] text but instead use news to frame a story that emerged in a conversation. In addition, people pay attention to news selectively (see also Martin 2008). According to Bird, the evaluation of news is always situated in the already established worldviews of the audiences, and they use news incorporated into issues of value, such as morality or religion. (Bird 2011) This view to the news differs from the traditional journalistic questions of news criteria or “the message getting through”.

In a recent study ‘Kelluva kiinnostavuus’ (Towards Engaging Journalism) (Heikkilä & al 2012) based on audience group discussions on journalism the empirical findings suggested that in the habitual uses of media, people relied on news as a privileged access-point to the “mediated centre of society” (Couldry 2003). Based on 77 group discussions (organized around existing social networks of the informants) the authors studied the audiences of journalism from the viewpoint of what people *do* as media users instead of focusing *who* the audiences are.

They found out that the news audiences seem to be more political and critical towards news journalism than the researchers had anticipated. Moreover, the audiences of the news seemed to impose higher standards on accuracy, relevance, and transparency of journalism than what the groups of journalists interviewed in the project did. (Heikkilä & al 2012)

The researchers suggest that news organizations should learn how to connect better with what takes place in social networks, for according to their research, people enjoy discussing social problems with their peers. (Ibid.) To take this observation seriously, news media should continue providing people with quality news material for public discussion, since journalism is appreciated for the analytical and profound insights it offers for its audiences.

4.1 Young people and children as media users

The media culture of young and children has changed from the beginning of 1990’s very rapidly. Internet, consoles, computer games and mobile phones have come into their daily lives. There are also more television programs and the content of the television has changed strongly. Nowadays we talk about “media childhood” because different kind of media is so essential part of childhood (Kupiainen 2002).

Youth and children using multiple medias are named as “digital kids” (Niinistö and Sintonen 2007), “generation Net” (Tapscott 1998, Kangas 2011), “digital natives” (Prensky 2001), “insiders” (Lankshear and Knobel 2006) as well as “Millennials” (Kangas, Lundvall and Sintonen 2008). These nick names are related to the process where children are naturally growing into media users. The

youth culture is typically open-minded. They are the pioneers adapting new media devices, technologies and ways to express themselves. When some content of the media becomes popular, they start to look for some new content or type of using the media (Coogan and Kangas 2001). According to 2007 survey of the Pew Center there is a dramatic increase of youth's own media production that suggest that the trend of media consumption is toward more and more active participation. (Lenhart & al. 2007)

In youth culture the use of media is highly socially related. Media consumption is affected by friends, parents, siblings and other social networks. If one's friends reject some media content, then the motivation to use this unpopular content decreases. Young and children use media often in company; they listen to the music, watch the television, or surf in the internet etc. In addition, they can make some videos and animations –or write an updating at the social media. (Uusitalo, Vehmas and Kupiainen 2011.)

The Finnish media research has usually focused to one specific moment at time or to only one age group at time and the long-term changes in the media usage of youth and children are not well documented. However, in 2007 the profile study considering the media usage of youth began at the University of Tampere (Noppari, Uusitalo, Kupiainen and Luostarinen 2008). Every third year 60 youth and children will be interviewed, they are asked to keep a media diary and they do some media tasks. In 2010, the 11 and 14 years old children in this profile study were active in using internet and social media, especially Facebook and game forums. They skillfully produced content to the media (blogs, photos, comments to the forums, videos), but there was only few how made this media contents widely public. Desire to publish was limited by protection of privacy, self-criticism and friends opinions. (Uusitalo et al. 2011.)

From 2007 to 2010 the mobile phone usage of these 11 and 14 years old children had changed. In 2010, the mobile phone had become more like an entertainment, and playing the music with that had often replaced the use of mp3 devices. Interestingly the internet usage was not very common with the mobile phone, the 11 and 14 years old children preferred the computers for using the Net. (Uusitalo et al 2011.)

Uusitalo et al. (2011) also observed the increasing trend in reading the newspaper when the children get older. Even half of the children at the age of 11 were already reading daily newspaper. These children liked for example sport pages, weather information, information about television programs and cartoons. Three years older children were in addition also interested in the news, and most of the 14 years old children read a newspaper daily.

There are some news sites for children, such as Newsround by BBC (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/>) but the study of childrens' news consumption are few. There is a usability study of internet news sites ongoing (De Cock & Hautekiet 2012) and some research on the youth and news (e.g. Emde & al. 2012) but it seems that the news and journalism in general is defined relevant for high

school students and older. There is a need for both news media content for children and research on children as users of the news media.

The 11 and 14 years old preferred to use facilities combining different functions. By the internet they have a connection to the online shops, online newsmagazines, television programmes, games, social media and other kind of networks. The most common social media they used was Facebook, where they can take care of their networks, send links, load pictures and videos, be fans of their favorite things and play games. (Uusitalo et al 2011.) Will Facebook and other social media sites become the dominant news environment for these 'digital natives'?

5 MyNews Research

5.1 News, Identities and Daily Life

Vivienne Martin (2008) suggests that the roles news media occupy in our lives depend heavily on our identities. Hence, how we consume news has to do with who we are in the different circles in our daily life, and how we position ourselves in our social interactions. The news surround us in our daily life and according Martin the identities are in the key role when we become aware of the news, pay attention to a news topic or become interested enough in a piece of news for actually reading it.

Our informants' backgrounds vary; they have different family and work situation, education, etc. We were curious to find out if we could analyze from the interviews reasons for consumption of news that link to the personal history and experiences of the informants

From the interview talk we categorized different relations with news. There were the news-addicts i.e. *heavy-users* of news who emphasized the importance of news in their lives and consumed a lot of different news media. The *moderate users* do follow the news but news media is less important to them. *Non-using* the news media was quite rare but still there were a couple of informants that did not consume the news. Furthermore, many of the interviewees described some non-using while they listed news media that was not part of their daily life and news contents that do not appeal to them. In the following we describe further these different user profiles.

Heavy-users. Some of the informants described their news use as a news addiction. As news media consumers they need to know what is happening in the world, and hence they follow the news continuously during the day, usually via different media. On their vacations, at the summer cabin, and even on holidays abroad, the news has to be available. The heavy-users of this research seem to be in most of the cases also other ways active in their lives, they are interested in the society by either participating in the politics themselves or in other ways forming opinions and taking part in discussions in public. This is connected to the idea of Jeffries & al. (2007) of how active news following has a unifying function: people who follow news and talk about current events are more connected to their

community, more active politically and more tolerant socially than those who do not follow the news.

Sometimes the medium itself is the addictive element in the news use, as described in the following:

I watch news broadcasting once a day. But then I have “the teletext neurosis”, that started sometimes in the teenage and which I haven’t got rid of. If I am at home, on Saturday or on Sunday, and if I haven’t checked the teletext through for let’s say three hours, I almost develop a sweat. It’s a weird thing. (M 25-34)

However, it seems that the addictive element in most of the cases was the connectedness to the news flow instead of ‘a must’ to use certain news media. The heavy-users either have the radio on all day or then they turn on the television or the radio in order to catch up with the latest news. In addition to Finnish television news, foreign news channels such as BBC and CNN were followed regularly by a couple of interviewees. The news sites on the internet were also used heavily in this group of interviewees. They read the sites of Finnish newspapers but also other news providers, discussion forums and news sharing sites (Reddit.com).

An interviewee told how he follows simultaneously television news and teletext: he listens to the news broadcast while browsing through news titles and articles of the teletext channel. Some of the heavy-users used iPad or other mobile devices as well. While not sitting in front of the internet or television, they could enable the access to the news flow with their mobile phones.

These heavy-users explained their active news following not only with the “addictiveness” of the news but also as a habit or even a form of existence:

It is a question of the entire existence. You have been aware of what is happening in this village, this country, this world, for 40 years. (M 60+)

In this sense, following the news has become an essential part of the identity. Continuous news following was due to their personality, their upbringing and their life style. News have value for them, they fulfill their needs to know about the world, to keep up with the society, and to understand its happenings, the reasons and the consequences.

Moderate users. For those, whose news media usage we categorized as moderate, news following was also a strong habit but less important and not as identity-based activity than for the heavy-users. Instead, the news was experienced as a routine structuring the day:

I feel that the news build my day, giving the rhythm to it. (F 60+)

There is research that shows that following the news is very well rooted in the daily routines. (E.g. Gauntlett & Hill 1999) The news habits are developed within the family as teenagers, and the habitual use continues in their lives later on.

However, as Bird notes, this habitual use of the news may disappear due to the changes in the media environment in general: Today's youth may not feel being informed by the news media as necessary as the earlier generations. The connectedness may be created by other sources such as social media sites that also deliver news. (Bird 2011)

We found out in our research that if there was not time in a day for the news following routines it was not problematic for the moderate news users. They tend to consume news when it is possible time-wise, and occasionally, on busier days, the news media is laid aside. Quote "*I don't necessarily have to know*" (F 25-34) captures the attitude in this user group.

Moderate users not only routinely use the news but also have a pragmatic attitude towards the news usage. They mentioned that they follow the news for the work purposes, which can be interpreted that one of the functions for their news usage is information seeking and thus they utilize news also in their profession.

The interviewees in this group read usually a newspaper regularly; many of them preferred a local newspaper instead of Helsingin Sanomat, though also HS had its fans. In addition, the radio was rather much used in this user group, many of the informants mentioned liking it as a news media and listening to it during the work days or at home. In the moderate user group mobile phones were also used for news following: one interviewee actually wished better possibilities for mobile use, for at the moment the old model of her mobile phone restricted the use of mobile news.

Non-users. There were not many non-users of the news among the informants, and those, who stated not to be interested in the news, still occasionally read newspapers or watched television news. In declaring that they do not follow the news, they actually positioned themselves in other audience groups than those that are consuming the news. One of the interviewees positioned herself as "an entertainment-geek", another stated that she has turned off the news-following deliberately because she does neither feel that she needs the news nor is that interested in what is happening in the world. Non-using can become a routine, just as following the news daily, as the following quote shows:

I guess it has become a routine, this way to relate to the news by staying out of the news flow. There is not a day or a time period that I really wanted to read some [news]. It is the same week after week. (F 25-34)

However, besides non-users we should discuss non-using. Talk on non-using existed widely in the research interview data. The interviewees described the news media and the news content that they are not using. The reasons for non-use varied: one user did not have a television; another did not like to sit in front of the computer, so in both cases there were restrictions in the use of the specific news media.

One reason mentioned for not consuming the news was that some informants did not consider themselves the type of person that would discuss societal issues. In

these cases, the news was seen mainly as important material for public discussion and these interviewees positioned themselves as outsiders of these discussions.

Naturally one important reason for non-using the news is the lack of time. Some of the interviewees did not have time to read newspapers because of the busy work life, others because they had small children – there just is not a peaceful moment to sit down in front of the news.

In addition, non-using talk took place in the interviews when the interviewees described how their news usage has changed during the years or how it probably will change in the future. For instance, those who were not reading newspapers described how they used to read earlier when they had more time or when the newspaper was subscribed in their childhood home. But also slowing down the rhythm of the life was a reason for not reading newspapers: Some of the elderly informants had given up newspaper subscriptions for different reasons. One felt that he did not have such a strong orientation for information anymore; another was anticipating the format change in the local newspaper and had decided not to subscribe a tabloid version of the paper.

5.2 Social Use of News

Social media has at least potentially changed the relationship between audiences and news media. As newspaper reading and television news watching is declining, and people move to the internet, the shared news consumption could be interpreted to decrease, for internet news following is usually a solitaire act of browsing and reading, and the usage is not tied to specific times, and it is tailored to the preferences and individual tastes of the user. (Bird 2011) However, news contents are shared and commented via several social media applications such as Facebook, Twitter or Reddit, furthermore ‘liked’, ‘recommended’ or discussed on the news sites. News audiences are also creating the news events by taking action and reporting it in social media as for example The Guardian’s Reading the Riots research inspiringly shows (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/series/reading-the-riots>).

People make conscious choices when sharing and circulating the news. They decide what media they pass along, in what form and to whom in which forum. Green & Jenkins (2011) talk about the spreadability of media in the sense of technical facilities that enable circulating media content, the social networks that link people when sharing, and diverse motives people have for sharing media content. They stress, similarly than Martin (2008) that it is people’s identities and the values and norms of their networks that define what is meaningful and valuable content for sharing. Some content may be circulated in small, localized networks whereas other media may spread across wide range of social networks, different interest-groups and audience segments.

Moreover, the digital environment not only allows the rich sharing and responding possibilities but also enables news generated by users themselves via blogs, Twitter etc. (Bird 2011) Are we becoming *producers*, as Jenkins (2006) suggests?

5.2.1 Sharing the News

Few of the interviewees actually described themselves as persons who actively share news content on the internet. They took a relatively distant position for internet sharing, it did not seem to be among the top uses of the news media. Yet, sharing news in face-to-face situations was mentioned often in the interviews and the interviewees also described concrete examples of discussing about the news with the others. As also the news media diaries resulted, the face to face sharing within the closest circle of people was the most typical way of sharing the news articles.

The interviewees approached the question of receiving shared news media content from the viewpoint of information. They value news contents that are interesting and new to them and discard non-relevant, yellow paper type of news. However, sharing news for instance in Facebook was widely recognized rooted in the life situations of those who are shared, it is “self-motivated news-production”, as one of the interviewees noted, when she was criticizing the low quality of shared content.

A face to face sharing took place often in the work, during coffee breaks, or among family members. When news are being shared at work, it is due to some active colleagues who start the discussion on news. Sharing, according to the interviewees, depends a great deal on personality: some people “want to share all the time”, as one of the interviewees stated, categorizing herself as a person who often wants to sit down quietly with her own newspaper.

The type of news content that is often shared is according the research data political or local news, entertainment or stories of accidents or crimes, and also content that relates to the work of the one who is sharing the news. Martin (2008) suggests that political news tend not to be discussed in workplaces, instead they are shared in more intimate surroundings with family and friends. In our study it seems that at least in some work places talking politics does happen, though the nature of shared news was not always mentioned in the interviews.

Face to face sharing consisted mostly of big news events, political news and other news topics considered important, interesting or surprising by the interviewees. Discussing about the news of the day was part of the daily life of the interviewees, as the following quote from the interview of a married couple (both were in the same research interview) shows:

Husband (M 60+): *When I notice in Aamulehti [newspaper] these happenings, I say that read this. All these political [news] etc. and then we discuss.*

Researcher: *Does this happen daily?*

Husband: *Yes, we do discuss daily about some news. Today we discussed how it has been snowing and the highways have been jammed. Our daughter-in-law drives on that road, and we talked that it was lucky she wasn't on the road driving to her kids then. She would have had to wait for hours.*

Wife (F 60+): *We mostly criticize that what should have been done right. That why are we facing again these same mistakes.*

Reasons for sharing. The quote above is an example of the multitude of the ways of how people relate to the news and the motivations for why they start talking and sharing the news with the others. These things have to do with news criteria as well. First, a piece of news is news worthy: something has happened, in this case it has snowed a lot. Secondly, the news has to do with people's everyday life: the news article is local and has a potential effect on the lives of the family of the interviewees. Thirdly, people have a stance on the news, here it was critical: probably the authorities had not been effective enough to clear the snow on the roads.

Especially the elderly interviewees described they shared news discussing with their spouse and in some cases also with their adult children and their spouses. News content was shared when it was thought to be important or in some other ways interesting for the receiver who may not have read the news.

I [share news] to my daughter-in-law, for she has not time to follow the news. I shared some news about the health care center. There are a lot of news about how bad things are there, and she knows that herself as well, so it is not a news for her. (M60+)

Another example for sharing from the older generation to a younger one was a story of one interviewee, who shared a local newspaper story of how dangerous it is if a compact fluorescent lamp falls into pieces. She wanted to share the information especially to a daughter of hers who lives in another city and for that reason has not seen the piece of news. The interviewee was annoyed that the information was delivered by a free local daily newspaper instead of a bigger national news media for she doubted that many people actually know about the issue.

Another interviewee argued on his sharing that the need for information and the need for interaction walk hand in hand, the relevance of the news is born in discussions with the others. Other interviewees also mentioned the role of shared news as a debate starter or discussion topic in different social contexts such as at work or at informal get-togethers. The motivation to share hence is to be among the ones who know what is going on around them and inform others as well.

Sharing was seen problematic and difficult in the sense that people do not want to push or to be "noisy"; even if they have a feeling that they want to share some content, they hesitate and think who they want to share that content with. This attitude, though, may vary depending on the age. The more used to the sharing culture of the internet people are, the less they tend to worry about what the others think of their sharing or how obtrusive the others may feel it.

Especially on social media sites, news content seems to be strongly connected to the identities and interests of the one who is passing along the news item. Researchers share news that link to their research topics, activists share news with societal connection or link to activism, sport fans share sport news etc.

Most of the interviewees seem to relate quite pragmatically to the news flow they are receiving both face-to-face discussions and on the internet shared by their peers. They eye the feed, check out what there is interesting for them, and leave the rest. One of the interviewees described the feelings of frustration over the nonsense shared and fatigue for the flood of information the internet provides.

One informant in the youngest age group criticized the sharing culture for the lack of the source evaluation. He regularly follows sharing sites such as Reddit.com, and emphasized that the attitude towards videos and such spreading on the internet should be first and foremost critical, at least in the beginning. People tend to share videos without any source criticism, which enables quick and wide spreading of inadequate information and even lies. According to the interviewee, a good example of this was the Kony 2012 case that was currently ongoing when he was filling the news media diary.

5.3 My Ideal News Media

5.3.1 Quality of News Media

In the research interviews most of the informants were quite happy with the quality of the regional and local newspapers. The morning paper delivered to home was described as trustful, reliable, familiar and *“almost like an old friend of mine”*. The articles were easy to find as they were at the same place every time, and one answered she likes very much the special *“Hyvä arki”* –theme published in Aamulehti (F 60+).

Some interviewees have read the same regional newspaper their whole life and felt they cannot be without this newspaper. Also the news addicts said the newspaper is needed as it gives the background and detailed information. Reading of the regional newspaper was mentioned twice when they were asked what they would like to do more if they had more time. However, there was also one interviewee who said she will never again order the regional newspaper because she thought this newspaper was telling lies about one local event many years ago (F 60+).

Quality of the television news. Attitudes towards television were more divided than towards newspapers. One news addict said *“the television news is objective, but the public news from YLE is only the official truth of the society, not the whole truth”* (M 60 +). He continued by saying he trusts now more to the television news of YLE for they make increasingly the news themselves and do not always take them directly from news agency STT. Especially the political news was not very well trusted. One active news follower for example thought this kind of news is too much opinionated (M 60+).

In general, the foreign news was mentioned to be *“something that you do not know how it really is”* (M 60 +). This can be interpreted that the more distant the news event is the more difficult it feels to evaluate the accuracy of the reporting. The other problem according the interviewees was the superficiality of the foreign

news when the deep understanding of the history and roots of the current situation was missing.

The amount of advertisement in the television and newspapers was thought to be increased during the last years, and the advertisements of the channel's own products were also experienced to be irritating. Some of the respondents highlighted that they did not like the news reports of the commercial television channel MTV3. They thought there were too many advertisements and they wondered if the commercial channels tell any news that may harm the advertisers or investors.

A couple of informants used regularly teletext and they classified teletext as a fast, detailed, accurate and comfortable device. The informants who used teletext liked about the way they could flip the news. One elderly respondent used teletext and television at the same time by watching television without sound and reading teletext news. Teletext also gave more specialized information for example about football and economic indicators. Teletext channel MTV3 was especially good in giving backgrounds about football games as a young news addict describes:

Teletext channel MTV3 is really good device to follow up the football... It gives more background and history... it is really wide... it contains many details about football. (M 25-34)

The superficial and fast internet news. Most of the news addicts in this research used internet daily to check out the latest news. It was said to be the fastest and easiest way to get the news, but they also said the news had become superficial especially on the internet. The quality of the news was also said to be lower nowadays than before because of the increased hurry in the news production. Some problems occurred with headlining, and the consumers did not always know what they will get, when they open the internet links. This irritated the users, and one described the situation “*it is like an Easter egg, you never know, what you get when you open it*” (M 60+). One interviewee called herself as “an entertainment-freak” and was pleased to the way the yellow papers Iltalehti and Ilta-Sanomat organized their online sites, but in comparison she thought the regional newspaper Aamulehti had too much information on their news site (F 25-34).

One mentioned the news feed channel Reddit (www.reddit.com) to be a trusty site which can give fast reactions to the news published (M 25-34). This young news addict argued “*if there is anything dubious in the news, the people commenting the news in the news feed channel Reddit will react for sure. The critics come up so fast*” (M 25-34). In this case, the trustworthiness of the news was socially constructed.

Some of the interviewees did not like the news to become entertainment. They wanted the news to be objective, factual and even uninteresting. They evaluated people to be interested in topical issues without the news to be intentionally dramatized. Especially in the political issues the headlines and stories have been too much like entertainment – even yellow paper –style. This kind of news was

experienced as underestimating the consumers and they were afraid of losing the point of the real news.

Well, I think everyone [media] has a similar kind of problem. They should not underestimate consumers by highlighting the “light” news in front. People are however interested in the current news, so I think the basic stuff is enough. Certain kind of people is interested in it. So there is no need to make any dramatic headlines to get more readers. I would trust more to the more traditional ways of making the news.
(F 25-34)

I think the purpose of the news is to transmit the arid, factual information. They do not have to make the content somehow entertaining, because this loses the point of the factual news. (F 25-34)

5.3.2 Changes in the Use of News

Possible changes in the work life situation correlated with the time interviewees used with the news media. Those who had not had any change in their situation in life for a long time had only some changes in their way of using the news media. These changes were for example using more television channels (like CNN) only in some extraordinary situations or reading regional newspaper only during the summer time and holidays. The bigger changes in the use of news came up when students graduated and full-time working started, or when people retired. Ex-students said they have no more time to read the newspapers as well as they used to, and the use of internet as a news source had declined as they have not time to use the Net. On the other hand, one full-time worker thought if her job some day includes more economic responsibility, then she will probably be more interested in the political and economic news.

Most of the elderly active news media users had increased the use of media after retirement. Interestingly, in some cases, they reinvented the old habits they had had before their working life began. The mornings started with peaceful moment by reading carefully the regional newspapers and by listening to the radio for every hour to get the news. The elderly users told that they use the internet to get the news more often after the retirement. One senior news addict described he had “*very much decreased the use of news after the change in the political situation in the society and retirement*”, but even after this reduction he watches six or seven news reports daily and uses actively internet to get the latest news (M 60+).

Future use. In this research we also asked interviewees to predict how they will use the news in the future. Most of the changes they predicted were connected to possible changes in their work situation. For example students thought their use of internet and their news following will both decrease when starting a full-time work. Students said they are very much following the news because they have in their current situation enough time to do so. One elderly active wondered if he will use any news after the retirement; he had also decided to not to subscribe any more the regional newspaper after it will become tabloid-size. Those who lived in

a rather stable phase in their life predicted no changes in the way they will use the news in the future.

The online newspapers were mentioned to be potentially much more used in the future than they are nowadays. In the group of news addicts some were ready to use only the online newspapers in the future. They were already used to using the internet for information-seeking. For example ecological reasons were mentioned as a reason to choose an online newspaper:

It has started to irritate me, these paper magazines. I do not know how they do ecologically, thinking about their carbon footprint. And there is also so much advertisement in the Helsingin Sanomat, whole pages, I just skip them... I am right ready to start using the online newspapers only.
(M 60+)

One busy, young full-time worker told she subscribes to the online Helsingin Sanomat every day, but she also subscribes the paper version of Helsingin Sanomat on Sundays. She evaluated she will read only the online newspapers in the future and she would like to *“have a really fast mobile phone to use the internet and get the internet news, and it could be used during the bus trip or in the train”* (F 25-34).

The interviewees also forecasted some possible threats in the future. They may lose their health and become unable to read or hear the news or they can get unemployed and become unable to by the news. Furthermore, the news production system itself may be felt changing too much. Changes in the news production routines, timetables or even new anchors in news broadcasting may cause uncertainty to a person with the news media oriented daily structure. One senior news follower described the changes this way: *“after following a certain radio news broadcast for decades, the anchor feels like a friend and the new anchor does not feel like a proper one”* (F 60+).

5.3.3 My Wishes for the News Media and the Potential Use

The wishes for the media were diverse among the research interviewees. Every one of them had some personalized wishes. One hoped for example more detailed background stories about Africa and another one hoped for special reports dealing with applied medical systems. One news addict mentioned that the journalists of YLE should be able to present the political proposals and ideas of the Government as economic data (M 60+). These numbers should be calculated to every kind of economic activity and the journalist should be able to tell to the audience how these political proposals affect to the lives of different groups of people. This requires hard journalistic work, open source data and use of wide range of experts, but he evaluated this could be a realistic change in the way of making political news.

Technological innovations. In the youngest group of interviewees some technological innovations were wished. One news addict wished for the combination of television and internet by saying:

Some kind of innovation about the combination of television and internet they have not yet done. There are already some of them. I have the "Sonera Koti-TV" [home television of Sonera] in the upstairs. I think it is a very good step on the way when everything comes via internet into that. I was among the first ones to take it. We have had it already for a year and a half. (M 25-34)

Another young news addict did not have television any more, but he followed the television news on the net via YLE Areena television service. He used a lot the internet in order to get information, and he hoped for selected news feed possibility in his mobile phone. He also wanted the mobile phone connection to be faster than it nowadays is. In the future, he would like to buy only the online newspaper, if there is a special version made only for the iPads.

Well, I would like to have a certain input to the mobile phone, and then certain news sources under that [input]. It would be most handy way to follow, perhaps. I know, some of this already exist, but I have not used them yet. (M 25-34)

In the research interviewees we asked the informants what is the meaning of the news in relation to the other media genres? One news addict answered he has the television only for watching the news. He was a habitual news follower and used many devices to compare news contents. He also followed actively the international television channels BBC and CNN. When travelling to Canada he had seen television channel continuously broadcasting the news at public places. He would like to have a television channel with ongoing news feed also in Finnish language:

There are some channels broadcasting the news continuously in America and in Canada. In the background of the continuous news broadcasting there are also two ongoing newsflashes. First of them tells what is going on at the same time and the second one shows the weather forecast. This is the concept I like... There could be one channel broadcasting continuously the news [in Finnish]. (M 60+)

One of the young interviewees who did not use very often news media would like to have a news site made for busy users. This news site could include the main entertainment news in Finnish and also only the most important domestic and international news. These articles should be quite short and dense because she wants to get the news in a short time and effectively.

Why there could not be just only the entertainment news, that kind of, that you could just get fast the stuff, you are interested in. And there could be the combination of the best news, whatever they are. There can already exist that kind of news site, but I have not found that yet... That kind of [site] including briefly and pithy what happened this week, it

could be some kind of week review... The point is, there should not be so much unnecessary information. (F 25-34)

Willingness to pay. Most of the news addicts thought they might buy some extra news articles online, if they could make the payments in their Net bank. They were conditionally interested in articles giving background to the current news. These online articles should give something extra they could not get from the daily newspaper, for example background information to foreign news, detailed economic facts about the current situation at the stock exchange or local news delivered directly to the mobile phone.

One interviewee mentioned that she would like to be sure about the good quality of the article before buying. She said there should be *“either a long insert about the story or one should be able to read the first lines of the story before paying.”* (F 25-34) Furthermore, it would be good if the background articles were on the already used news sites (such as Aamulehti, Helsingin Sanomat, Taloussanomat, Ilta-Sanomat, Iltalehti, Kauppalehti), for it would be *“the most natural way to get it, from these easily used sites, that are already here.”* (F 60+)

The informants would like to buy these news only irregularly without preordering or other commitment. When we asked how much they would like to pay for this kind of article, the answers were *“below one euro”, “20 cents”* and *“less than one piece of bread”*. The interviewees thought it was difficult to define the right prize –maybe because this system is not in daily use yet. One news addict argued *“the prize of one single article in the Net can not be very high as the daily Helsingin Sanomat costs 50 to 60 cents per day –and this newspaper contains very many articles.”* (M 60+)

There were also some young interviewees saying they probably will not ever buy online articles because they think newspapers already are too expensive and figured there will never be such interesting news they would like to pay extra for.

6 Conclusions

The MyNews research confirmed that the changes in the news use most potentially take place within life changing situations of people. This is supported by earlier research as well. (E.g. Bourdan 2003, on the consumption of television). It seems that though much of the news media use is habitual, these habits are changed when the context of daily life changes. The potential changes in the news consumption derive from the availability of time and money, changes in the family situation (having kids, moving on their own, retiring from their work etc.)

The interest in the news and accordingly the volume of the news use varied a great deal among our informants. There were both news addicts and non-users of the news, and both of these groups argued their position strongly starting from their identities and experiences: they connected their news consumption with who they are.

The addictiveness of the news flow observed in this research is predicting a potential change in the consumption of news in general: It seems that some of the news followers have become more active as users because of the availability of parallel news feeds in different news media. Earlier, their addiction was targeted to one specific news media, for instance the morning newspaper consumed in the morning at breakfast time whereas now getting the news flow emerged as the most important form of news usage.

Moreover, we found out that people tend not to become too fixed in their habits, but they also listen to other people's recommendations and follow each others' sharing. We were also surprised, how easy it was for the interviewees to imagine ways and new media tools with which they would like to receive news, and how clearly they were able to formulate wishes for and also criticism towards news media content.

Our research supported Martin's observation of how people's relationship with news can be described as 'sceptical friendship', meaning that though news following is part of people's everyday life, and they define the news following important, they still approach news with defensive strategies, for instance being aware and careful of how news affect their lives. (Martin 2008)

Most of the informants were quite happy with the quality of the regional and local newspapers, but the attitudes towards television were more divided. Though teletext maybe considered as old media, in these days of the internet, those who used teletext classified it as a fast, detailed, accurate and comfortable device.

Most of the "news addicts" used the internet daily for checking out the latest news. It was said to be the fastest and easiest way to get the news, but they also said the news had become superficial, especially on the internet. Furthermore, some of the interviewees did not like the news to become entertainment; they wanted the news to be objective, factual and even uninteresting. This had to do with the understanding of the whole concept of the news: for some, the news is the product of journalism, fulfilling the news criteria, whereas for the others the news was defined by the newsworthy for the individual: what is new for me.

Sharing still took place mostly in face-to-face discussions with family and friends and in the workplace. The informants of our research rarely shared any piece of news via social media, though they quite often face news shared by the others. The shared pieces of news tend not to be very profound, let alone creative, instead it appears to be human-interest issues that become recycled in the Net. In this sense, we are not entered the phase were the audience is the *producer* of the news. (vs. Jenkins 2006, see also Bird 2011) Instead, the news audiences still mainly stay on the receiving side of the news process.

However, promising efforts of activating the news audiences seem to be the collaborated actions of journalism and its audiences, where the news audiences are incorporated in finding, creating and discussing the news in the social media platforms, done by for example Yle Suora linja newsdesk (http://yle.fi/uutiset/suora_linja/).

The online newspapers were mentioned to be potentially much more used in the future than they are nowadays. During the interviews there not yet existed the public discussion about charging the use of online news content (the debate started later when Helsingin Sanomat announced the paywall of part of the content of HS.fi), so the interviews were not affected by the discussion and the issue was not raised in the interviews.

In the youngest group of interviewees some technological innovations were wished. They mentioned the combination of television and internet by the way it has not yet been done, special version of online newspapers made only for the iPads, getting selected input to the mobile phone including selected sources, getting faster mobile phone connections, and a television channel broadcasting continuously news reports with newsflashes in Finnish.

Most of the news addicts thought they might buy some extra news articles online; they were conditionally interested in articles giving background information to the current news, and they would like to buy these news only irregularly without any preordering or other commitment. The prize of extra online article should not be more than one euro.

Appendix 1

MYNEWS

Haastattelurunko

21.3.2012

1) Uutispäiväkirjakokemukset

- Miltä uutispäiväkirjan täyttäminen tuntui?
 - o Oliko jokin kysymys vaikea vastata?
 - o Tuntuuko, ettei lomakkeella kysytty jotain olennaista asiaa, joka kuuluu uutisten kuluttamiseen, mitä?
- Kun täytit lomaketta, millaisia asioita/mediasisältöjä pidit ”uutisina”, mitkä ovat sinun kriteerisi sille, mikä on uutinen? Missä raja menee ts. mikä ei ole uutinen?
- Millaisia uutispäiviä seuratut päivät olivat ns. tyypilliseen uutisseurantaan verraten
 - o Mikä oli ns. tavallista, mikä erilaista? Miksi?

2) Uutispäiväkirjasta nostetut kysymykset (hlökohtaiset haastateltavalle, 5-10)

3) Uutisten merkityksellisyys

- Miten luonnehtisit itseäsi uutisten kuluttajana (esim. aktiivisuus, aiheet, media(välinee)t. sisällöt, spontaanius vs. rutiinit, sosiaalisuusaspektit,...?)
- Mitä uutiset sinulle yhtenä monista kulutuksen kohteena olevista mediasisällöistä sinulle merkitsevät nykyisessä elämäntilanteessasi? Miksi näin?
- Onko aiemmin ollut erilaista, miten? Miksi?
- Millaiset asiat voisivat muuttaa tapojasi seurata uutisia? Miksi?
- Mihin suuntaan näkisit uutis”tapojesi” muuttuvat esim. seuraavien 5-10 vuoden aikana? Miksi?
- Oletko tyytyväinen niihin uutissisältöihin ja –muotoihin, sekä niihin välineisiin, joista uutisia nyt seuraat? Miksi/ miksi et?
- Millaisia uutisia et seuraa (et voi tai et halua seurata), miksi? (sisälty, lajityyppi, väline jne.)
- Jos saisit vaikuttaa täysin vapaasti uutissisältöihin ja niiden välittämisen kanaviin, millaista olisi ns. ideaaliuutisseuranta: millaisia uutisia, mistä välineistä, mihin aikaa, missä paikassa jne?
- Mitä maksat nyt seuraamistasi uutisista (mistä välineistä, minkä verran **noin**), onko se mielestäsi kohtuullista?
- Millaisesta uudesta uutissisällöstä tai –kanavista olisit valmis maksamaan?
- Entä mistä et haluaisi maksaa?

4) Uutisten sosiaalisuus ja jakaminen

- ovatko uutiset sinulle keskeinen puheenaihe muiden ihmisten kanssa, kenen, missä yhteyksissä?
 - o Millaisista uutisista keskustele yleensä, kenen kanssa?
 - o Millaisia uutisia (mistä välineestä, milloin) nostat itse aktiivisesti puheeksi?
 - o Entä millaisia uutisia ihmiset sinulle kertovat?
 - o Millaiset ihmiset mielestäsi käyttävät uutisia tähän tapaan ”yhteisöllisesti”, muiden ihmisten kanssa?
- JOS SOMEssa:
 - o Millaisiin uutisiin törmäät sosiaalisessa mediassa?
 - o Millaisia havaintoja sinulla ylipäänsä on verkossa julkaistuista ja levitetystä uutisista?
 - o Millaiset ihmiset verkostoissasi jakavat ja kommentoivat uutisia, miksi?
 - o Miksi luulet näiden nousevan esiin netissä?
 - o Poikkeavatko ne muuten seuraamistasi? Miten?
 - o Saatko sinulle henkilökohtaisesti jaettuja uutisia, millaisia ja keneltä, miksi?
 - o Kommentoitko tai jaatko uutisia eteenpäin, milloin ja miksi? Miksi et?
 - o Ovatko verkossa julkaistut uutiset, niistä käyty keskustelu ja kommentointi sinulle tärkeitä? Miksi, missä yhteyksissä, miksi ei?
 - o Mitkä hyviä puolia näet verkossa leviävässä uutistarjonnassa? Miksi?
 - o Entä mitä ongelmia/ huonoja puolia? Miksi?
 - o Millaisia uutisia tai uutisvälineitä, keskustelua, uutiskuluttamisen tapoja ym. toivoisit verkkoon?

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