

COMP325-17B
PHASE I

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Step 1: Observation

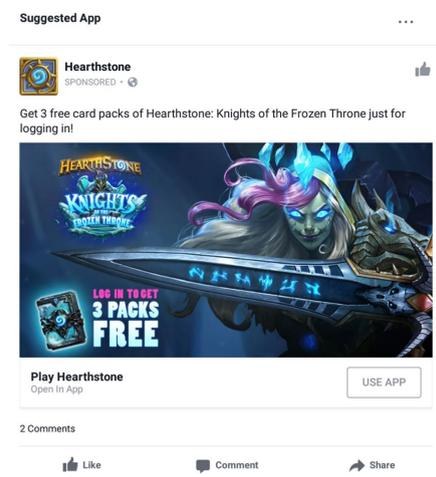
Gender: Male

Age: Young adult

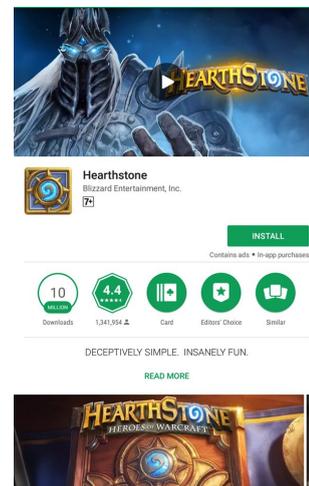
Nationality: European

Occupation: Student

I conducted the self observation at home in my room sitting at my computer desk, just as I arrived home after my day at university. I share a flat with 5 other people however all but 1 was out of the house. This is the place where I most commonly come across and also seek out news. As most of my university assignments can be completed at home, I spend the majority of my spare time at my desk. At my computer desk there is my computer itself and my mobile phone, both of these are my largest news sources. The only source that is usually used for gathering and discovering news, is from peers. This was not as abundant as there weren't many people home when the observation was done. This may hinder the results, but at my computer desk is the most realistic opportunity for the observation. The observation took place over the span of 2 hours as this is the longest sitting I would have at my computer desk.



Advertisement



Appstore

In the first hour I began checking social media websites that I am signed up with (facebook, twitter, youtube). I did this by using my phone's facebook application. The first news I came across was an advertisement that teased the new HearthStone expansion 'Knights of the Frozen Throne'. I stopped scrolling to read the advertisement roughly. It took me to the application's download page in the app store. Here I opened the 'Read More' and read through the text and then swiped through the image gallery. I then closed the app store and returned to Facebook to continue scrolling.



Link to the article

I closed Facebook and then began to work on my assignments, the next news I received was 10 minutes later from a friend via Discord, a voice and text chat service. It was a link to an article by the New Zealand Herald titled 'teenager left with mysterious bleeding'. I opened the link and scrolled through the article, looking at the images. Then I began to skim through the article's text. After this I closed the article and went back to working on my assignment.



Link to the track



Spotify

The last piece of news I came across during the observation was being told an artist has released new content. I received the news by message from a friend that I frequently discuss music with. After hearing that there was new content, I asked for a link to the content which previewed 'an album by Juicy J'. I clicked the link and was surprised that there was only one song.

I saw the preview of the link which contained the artist and the album, I thought it would be a link to the whole album but it was only one teaser track (as shown above). After this piece of news, I did not come across anything else that was news related in the 2 hour span of the observation.

After the self observation was completed I created an interview and completed the questions.

Step 1: Self Interview

Medium

Do you read paper-based sources such as newspapers, magazines or circulars?

No, as I find it much more practical and reliable to find news online.

Do you listen to the radio or watch TV?

No, for the same reasons above.

Do you receive emails, text messages or phone calls regarding updates or sales?

Yes, but they are few and far between as I am only subscribed to a few services.

Do you participate in any online communities such as forums or online clubs?

Yes, although not very actively.

Do you watch online videos, streams or listen to podcasts online?

Yes, I follow several content creators online.

Do you have a smartphone?

Yes, I use it for facebook everyday.

Topics

Do you follow any of these?

Politics Sports Gaming Celebrities Music

Do you consider personal social media content to be 'news'?

Yes

Do you consider store sale announcements to be 'news'?

Yes

Sources

Do you have any specific sources you like?

Yes, I prefer sources that are relevant to my hobbies and interests.

Do you have any specific sources you dislike?

Yes, there are several news sources that post information I am not interested in.

Searching

Do you go in search of news?

Yes, but only when I have heard of it in person and want to read up on it.

Do you browse news sources?

Yes, I browse facebook but it is limited to only pages I follow and not friends posts.

Do you have news sources ambiently playing (ie TV or radio in the background)?

No.

Trustworthiness

Do you have sources that you trust will be accurate?

Yes, newspaper and news channel websites.

Do you come across items that you don't believe?

Yes, depending on how astounding the news is and whether the source is respectable.

Do you come across items that you don't believe on sites you trust?

Yes, when I do I will use another website or source to confirm if it's accurate.

Do you double check information that seems false (checking with other news sources)?

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Do you consider word of mouth from family/friends a reliable source of news?

Yes, although if the news is unbelievable I will double check it online.

Do you come across news that does not provide the information you expected?

Yes, I frequently come across articles that are misleading.

Routines

What time of the day would you find yourself searching for news?

Probably the afternoon or throughout the night.

What time of the day would you find yourself browsing news?

In the morning when I wake up, when I arrive home in the afternoon and after dinner.

What is your routine when you browse news? (ie. check emails, read the newspaper and then browse Facebook)

I check my notifications and then browse Facebook.

Step 1: Overview

The information I have gathered from the observation, is that most of my news encounters are targeted to me and my interests due to the sources they are from. Advertisements and peers know the content that I am interested in and therefore provide news that I am more than likely to engage in. When visiting a news website (through the link provided from a friend), I completely disregarded the popular articles. This shows that I would not interact with promoted posts that did not relate to my interests or hobbies. The interview also shows this as I do not browse news sources other than Facebook, which I only use to look at content I am interested in.

In the interview I stated that I browse Facebook in the morning, when I get home and throughout the evening. As shown in the interview question and in the observation, my routine for checking news is only checking notifications and then browsing Facebook.

The interview and the observation show that the main two sources I use are Facebook and word of mouth. Other sources are used to confirm any speculations I may have.

I believe a lot of news that I receive as I trust my sources. However, there are still times when I feel the need to confirm by using an established news company, as stated in the interview.

In the observation, I came across an advert for HearthStone that I wanted to find out more about. However, I was unable to gather the information I wanted to. Then with the article of the teenager with ‘mysterious bleeding’, I was expecting to find out what the cause was. But the article did not conclude what it was. Later in the observation I was given a link to new music, the preview showed ‘new album from Juicy J’ but the page only contained the one song. This is a big news-related difficulty, in every occurrence during the observation, the content wasn’t what I expected. News related content works well as the content is usually related to what I am interested in and is useful to me. This would be caused by my few sources for news related content.

Step 2: Observation

Gender: Male

Age: Young adult

Nationality: European

Occupation: Student

The observation was conducted in the person's room at their computer desk. This is where they usually come across news. The observation was done in the afternoon just as they arrived home, which is when news encounters are most common for them. Their computer and phone were both present during the observation, their two main sources of news related content. The observation ran for 1 hour rather than 2, as 2 hours is too much time for a volunteered observation, and less than 1 hour is too short and not much information would be gathered. I observed them from behind on a chair so that I wasn't distracting them or pressuring them into acting a certain way. I also did not talk during the observation, so that I did not distract the user from their news browsing.

First they opened Facebook and began scrolling through their news feed. They came across several articles but continued scrolling without pausing. They stopped scrolling to read a news article preview about a 'Dead Cross Album Review' video being uploaded. They continued to scroll after reading this until they received a notification that one of their photos had been 'liked'. They opened the 'liked' photo and then closed Facebook.

Next they opened their email account and saw an email regarding their subscription to a club was about to run out. They opened this email and read through it before closing the email.

The subject's friend entered the room and began talking to the subject. The subject listened intently as their friend explained how they almost got robbed at night recently. The subject asked 'whereabouts were you?' and their friend told them where they were.

Another piece of news was from their friend, the friend explained how they almost had their glasses broken on the same night. The subject commiserated with their friend and asked if anything else had gone wrong that night. After this there was no other news during the observation.

Step 2: Interview

Questions with this symbol (+) are improvised, to gather more information

Medium

Do you read paper-based sources such as newspapers, magazines or circulars?

They occasionally read the nexus on a Monday. Only if they come across it, although this is common as they are abundant.

Do you listen to the radio or watch TV?

They do not.

Do you receive emails, text messages or phone calls regarding updates or sales?

They receive calls from work and emails from moodle everyday. They also receive text messages from their network provider about auto-topups and one off deals.

Do you participate in any online communities such as forums or online clubs?

Yes, they are in a music group on Facebook. Although they are not very active.

Do you watch online videos, streams or listen to podcasts online?

Yes. However, they only watch youtube videos.

Do you have a smartphone?

Yes they do.

Topics

Do you follow any of these?

Politics Sports Gaming Celebrities Music

Do you consider personal social media content to be 'news'?

Yes they do. Only if a person is affected largely by it, for example marriage or birth. They do not consider new profile pictures to be news.

Do you consider store sale announcements to be 'news'?

Yes they do. But only if it is a store that they are genuinely interested in.

Sources

Do you have any specific sources you like?

They prefer sources from multiple people, forums or Facebook. They prefer these because they believe having a lot of people involved makes the content more trustworthy.

Do you have any specific sources you dislike?

They dislike news websites that have misleading titles and ads to monetize their content. This is because they think if a company is driven by profit, it will not render accurate news.

Searching

Do you go in search of news?

They do yes.

+Why do you do this?

If they want to learn more about a topic.

Do you browse news sources?

Yes, they browse Facebook and Youtube.

+How often do you see content you are interested in?

They see a lot of news, but not much content that they are interested in.

Do you have news sources ambiently playing (ie TV or radio in the background)?

No they do not.

Trustworthiness

Do you have sources that you trust will be accurate?

Yes, they believe group discussions more reliable.

+What about news companies, why not go to them for news?

They think that if one person is writing an article, it can be biased. But if a group of people are discussing it you can get more accurate information.

Do you come across items that you don't believe?

Yes they do. They don't believe the content when it is too far fetched or extreme.

They don't think it is fake but are more sceptical of it.

Do you come across items that you don't believe on sites you trust?

Yes they do.

Do you double check information that seems false (checking with other news sources)?

Yes they always do if it is about something that matters to them.

Do you consider word of mouth from family/friends a reliable source of news?

Yes they do.

+Is there a threshold for that?

Yes. If it is someone they just met, they probably would not consider it reliable.

Do you come across news that does not provide the information you expected?

Yes they do.

+How frequently?

They rarely come across it.

Routines

What time of the day would you find yourself searching for news?

When they are on their computer during the afternoon.

What time of the day would you find yourself browsing news?

In the morning when they wake up, when they arrive home and before sleeping.

What is your routine when you browse news? (ie. check emails, read the newspaper and then browse Facebook)

They go to Facebook, they scroll until they are up to date then they go to Instagram.

Step 2: Overview

The observation showed that the subject receives a large amount of news in one sitting. However, as shown by their continued scrolling past the article links, they are not interested by very much of it. There was only one occasion where they stopped to read an article link, and even then continued to scroll on (without clicking the article). This is very different from my self observation, where I came across very little news. When I did come across news, I interacted with it 100% of the time, going to the article or page to find out more about it.

During the interview, they stated that they browse news in the morning, when they get home and before they go to sleep. This is very similar to the times I would browse news related content. The observation and interview show they also share similar sources for news related content, Facebook and word of mouth. However, they differ in their routine where they go to Instagram after finishing on Facebook.

The interview shows that they find that social media and social interactions are their trusted source of news. Also that they distrust news websites as they think the authors of articles may be biased, whereas it is harder for a group discussion to be biased. My results showed that I was the opposite, I would use news websites to confirm news related content I had received socially.

During the subject's observation they did not come across any news related previews or links that mislead them into thinking information would be provided. Whereas in my observation, every news piece I interacted did not have everything I expected. However, during the subject's interview they stated that they have experienced misleading news links or previews.

Step 3: Diary Summary

The Diary was taken on both weekdays and a weekend so that the results would cover both working days and non-working days. The results were recorded when I encountered them.

Day 1 was a weekend day that I didn't have any plans for working or going out.

The first news I came across was when browsing my Discord messages. I was told there was a new A\$AP Ferg song out. It was very believable as I am close friends with the person that informed me.

The second piece of news related content is the announcement of Guild Wars 2 expansion release date. I went looking for this news after I arrived home and viewed it from a trustworthy source, the creators Youtube channel.

Day 2 was a Monday and is the day that has the most news.

The first piece of news I received was when I woke up, browsing Facebook. I saw a page I follow had posted that Game of Thrones had been leaked. I found this very believable as it was covered by several other pages on Facebook.

When I arrived home I found the second news related content, that Guild Wars 2's new armour sets had been announced. I was told about this from a friend on Discord. I went to the content creator's Facebook page to find out more. I thought this content was believable as it was posted by the content creators themselves.

Later in the evening I was sent a message on Discord from a friend with a link to Liam Looper's new song. I believed this as it was sent by a friend I am close with.

Day 3 was a Tuesday and I went to university.

I looked for a certain piece of news when I arrived home from university. I used my computer to look for my paper's assignment grade. I found this very believable as it was on the university's official site.

The last news I received was later in the evening and was sent to me from a friend on Discord. They told me that a new skin was available for an operator in Rainbow Six. I believed my friend but I wanted to find out more about the skin so I went to the game developer's website.

Step 3: Diary Analysis

The diary study shows that the majority of the news related content was delivered to me, with 4 out of 7 of the them being encountered this way. The next most frequent is looking for them, with 2 occurrences and running across them only 1 time.

The 4 news related instances that were delivered to me were done so through Discord, a social messaging application similar to skype, from friends. This is the most common form of encountering news, followed by two other social media websites (Facebook and Youtube).

All of the encounters from the diary study were either when I woke up, when I arrived home or later in the evening. With the most popular time being when I arrived home, with 3 events occurring then, and 2 when I woke and 2 later at night. Also every news encounter occurred at home at my computer desk.

Almost all of the news content was at an international level, with only one being personal (my paper's results).

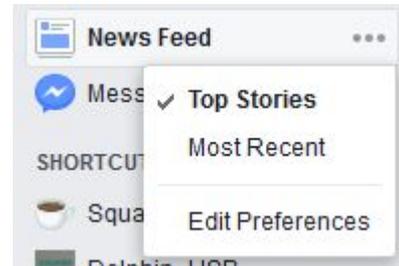
My pre-study belief that Facebook and social interaction as my main two sources of news has been proven correct by the diary study. It has also proven that I am most likely to encounter news when I arrive home. The diary study also proves that I trust my sources of news, this is shown by all of the encounters being marked as 'High' believability. My pre-study belief that most of my news is encountered at my computer desk has been proven true by the diary study as all of the encounters were at home at my computer desk.

My pre-study belief was not correct when concluding that Facebook was just as big of a source as gathering news from friends. In the observation, 1 out of 3 of the news pieces were from Facebook, but in the diary study only 1 out of the 7 news pieces was encountered on Facebook. I was very surprised that Facebook was not a more common source of news.

There were not many limitations of accessing news as the news I was encountered with was one directional and didn't need a dialogue. However, should I have needed to respond to or have any queries about the news I would have been able to as on both computer and phone you can respond to friends on Discord, comment on Youtube videos or comment on Facebook posts.

Step 4: Critique - Regularly Used System (Facebook)

Facebook supports all 3 forms of encountering news as they are all made very accessible and a common occurrence when using the website. Browsing is the most common way of encountering news on Facebook, the website's 'News Feed' function shows content shared by pages you follow, friends' content along with content they have shared. With the 'News Feed' you are able to scroll through a large amount of content easily, you can also customize it to only show certain content and also change the order that the content appears in.



News Feed Settings

Facebook's notification system allows for news to be serendipitously encountered, as a friend or family member can notify you of news related content. There are also advertisements on Facebook which are targeted towards you based on your interests and followed Pages, there are also recommended Pages and Groups that you may want to engage in (which would provide more relevant news)

Searching for news is the most difficult means of encountering news on Facebook, this is because the search function provided by Facebook prioritizes pages over individual articles, links or posts. To find content on Facebook, the user would have to go to a page and search through it for a post about the topic they were searching for. The image below(left) shows a search for a release date of a game, the information isn't in the searches but when I go to the developer's Facebook page I am able to find it (right).



Search and Results



GW2 Page Post

As I briefly covered above, Facebook has functions that allow you to make posts of news related content that is visible to your friends on the website. Friends (and the original poster) can react to these posts (Like, Happy, Angry, Sad, Wow), as well as comment on the posts. The comments on a post can also be replied to directly, creating a easy way to discuss a topic. These features help to support users in adding their own stories and commenting on news stories.

Facebook provides users with the Pages system, which are used to represent companies, groups, celebrities etc and are more formal ways of addressing large followings with news related content. Facebook also provides Groups, which Facebook users can join and use to view and discuss news related content. These two features make Facebook very suitable for news sharing and social communities.

As Facebook is heavily community driven, a lot of the content shared and discussed on the website could be fabricated. However, the community itself would be able to identify the content that isn't true and the content that is true.

Facebook supports my activities/interests highlighted in steps 1-3 as I only want to see news that is relevant to me. This is by ensuring the content I am shown is from friends and hand picked pages. There are also advertisements on Facebook that are based on your followed Pages and common searches.

Step 4: Critique - Not Regularly Used System (Radio's Edge Breakfast Show)

The Edge Breakfast Show provides the users with serendipitously encountered news through a live broadcast of scheduled items (both news related and non-news related). The content that the user is given may not interest them as the show has a large audience with a broad demographic. The show is also limited as a news system as it does not provide the user with a way to search for a topic they may be trying to research as the show is scheduled and static (it can not be rewinded, fast forwarded). Another limit is there is not browsing function from the Show for the same reasons, it is static and sticks to a schedule.

The show supports news sharing and social communities as users are able to call up and discuss with the show's hosts. However, both the time that you are able to call and also the length of time allowed for calling is limited by the schedule that is in place. The radio show also only allows one caller at a time which limits the depth of social discussions.

Users are able to call up the radio show during allocated times to share their news. However, this news has to fall under the show's predefined category of the segment. Users are able to comment on news stories by calling up, if the show has allowed time for the users to join in. This system supports adding users' own stories and commenting on news stories, but it is a very limiting and restrictive system.

News from the show is taken from a broad range of sources and the show must follow New Zealand broadcasting standards, which would make the content very believable. Although, the user submitted stories are not as reliably truthful as the user is anonymous and there is no large discussion for the community to clarify if the submission is fabricated or not.

This news system does not support my activities/interests highlighted in steps 1-3 as I only want to encounter news that is relevant to me. The news provided by the show is targeted to the broad audience and I would encounter a lot of news that did not interest me, and would miss out on news that did interest me but was not featured. The radio show is also only available 5 days a week at 6am-10am, which is not when I am most actively encountering news. The radio show also is broadcasted via radio which I do not own, and find impractical to engage with as I bike to university and prefer to read or watch news rather than listen to it.

Step 5: User Needs

- **Content Relative to User**

In Step 2 - Observation, the subject skipped a large collection of news article links due to the content not being relevant to them. Once the links were of interest to the subject, they interacted with the links.
- **Accessibility - Time**

In both Step 1 and Step 2 Interviews, it was emphasized that the time news was accessed was in the morning, afternoon and throughout the evening. This wide variety in times means that the user needs to be able to access the news system at any time.
- **Accessibility - Hardware/Software**

In Step 3, all of the encounters happened at home on my computer and mobile phone. The news system should be accessible on both computer and mobile phone so that the user has a more fluid and practical experience.
- **User Discussion**

In Step 2 - Interview, the subject said that they prefer news that is from friends or groups, so that the news can be more trustworthy. Because of this, having a system that enables user to connect and engage in discussions about topics will be needed.
- **Sharing**

In Step 1 - Observation and Step 3 - Diary Study, I was much more responsive to content that was shared with me via Discord from friends. The system should allow users to share content to each other directly and also to group.