

# The New FACES of NEWS

**T**HE ROLE OF “NEWSFLUENCERS” in reaching targeted demographics received a dramatic boost from the US presidential campaign. Via podcasts, subscriber-only newsletters and alternative online platforms, these independent content creators filter and interpret the news for loyal audiences that often dwarf traditional news channels. Locked in a tight race, Kamala Harris and Donald Trump courted non-traditional media to reach voters who might tune out a CNN or Fox News interview. New media creators were invited to party conventions and scheduled interviews with the candidates on their channels.

Harris did a 40-minute interview on *Call Her Daddy*, a show that boasts 10 million viewers per episode, according to *The Wall Street Journal*. Its audience is estimated by Edison Research to be 70% women and 76% under 35. Trump’s conversation with the host of *The Joe Rogan Experience* was close to

Content creators are gathering massive audiences for the news. Companies should take note.

By Brunswick’s **KIRSTY CAMERON, GEORGINA MALLOY, OLIVIA ORAN** and **RACHAEL COLLINS.**

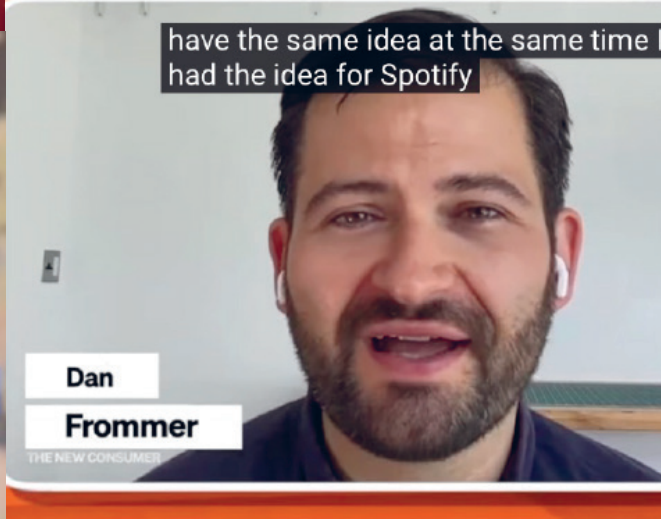


**PHIL ANDREWS**

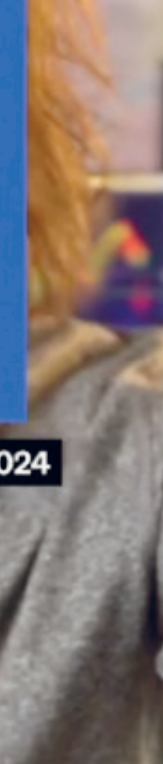


mean so it's like these people  
generally landlocked

Alex Cooper



have the same idea at the same time I  
had the idea for Spotify



Nothing But Tech



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Warren Buffett SOLD 50% of his Apple stock!

three hours long and netted nearly 50 million views on YouTube. That podcast's demographic is 80% men and similarly skews toward a younger audience.

The message for corporates here is that if you still associate the term “influencer” with TikTok dancers and YouTube beauty gurus, you're falling behind. A growing cohort of online influencers—whether independent journalists who've moved beyond traditional publishers or creators who have built loyal followings from the ground up—have become pivotal in the distribution of news and information. They can move markets, disrupt brands—and even shape the outcome of presidential elections.

## SOCIAL MEDIA as News Source

The reach and impact of digital creators are undeniable. Fifty-four percent of Americans say they at least sometimes get news from social media, up 12.5% since 2021. Some of this growth may be attributed to traditional media shared via social platforms, but audiences are also relying on independent content creators as sources of news and information. In fact, Pew's latest research shows that 1 in 5 Americans report getting their news from influencers, and 65% of them say these news influencers have helped shape their opinions on political, societal or global news. That number is only likely to grow.

These creators can disrupt business and drive public opinion and conversation on a global scale. Their ability to resonate with audiences authentically and on a personal level gives them a unique advantage over legacy news outlets and brands.

Although legacy media has for years endured massive newsroom layoffs and budget cuts, it is far from dead. In many ways in fact, new media relies on traditional journalism, with traditional media acting as a “wire service” for other channels.

“There are people who uncover stories and those who interpret stories and make them relevant to an audience,” said Jacklyn Dallas, a tech YouTuber with 250,000 followers who partners with companies like AT&T and Slack. “YouTubers are often focused on how to make topics compelling and understandable.”

Zaid Admani, an independent financial news commentator, added “I couldn't do some of what I do without the fantastic work journalists do. They're doing the real work; they're just not presenting the information for a young audience.”

With the convergence of journalism and influencers, corporate communicators must evolve too. Traditional media and owned channels alone are no longer sufficient to deliver businesses' messages. Neither is relying on marketing and brand teams that

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Kyla Scanlon

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have long led their company's relationships with consumer-facing influencers.

## Filling the TRUST VOID

Admani considers himself a “translator of the news,” framing complex topics into “easy to understand, relevant and funny content” for audiences. Kyla Scanlon, the author of the book *In This Economy*, boasts around 650,000 followers across her social media channels and hosts a podcast. “The work that I do is to educate people on the news,” she says.

Phil Andrews, founder of economics and corporate news platform *Maxinomics* now owned by Morning Brew, echoes the education aspect. “I want to point people in a direction and say, ‘Listen, this is going on. This is important. You're probably not hearing about it. Here's why it's important.’ There's this connection that people have with the person who put out the piece of content, that they don't have with *CNBC* or *Bloomberg*. It is very personal.”

While traditional news outlets and journalists are increasingly showing up via branded handles on platforms like TikTok and Instagram, their content can lack the authenticity, relevance, and entertainment factor that creators can carve out for themselves. If “facts and news are total commodities”—as Founder and Editor in Chief of *The New Consumer* Dan Frommer put it—news outlets need to up their game to retain and attract new, younger audiences.

Regardless of whether they can achieve this, newsfluencers are a new reality. Trust in institutions and mainstream media are at an all-time low, and young people have turned to relatable, seemingly impartial individuals as trusted sources of news and information.

## Engaged AUDIENCES

The opportunities for companies to reach audiences at scale and measure impact through these channels dramatically exceed those of traditional media outlets. “If you want to reach a lot of people, you have to use a creator. I once went on a TV show where they said, ‘We're gonna hit 80,000 viewers tonight!’ I get 80,000 viewers every day,” Scanlon says. “That's not a big deal anymore. If you really want to reach a lot of people, you have to go the social media route.”

For influencers, however, reach isn't the end game; it's engagement. As Joe Smith, Executive Producer at Patreon points out, “Most online creators value depth over breadth. Going ‘viral’ should not necessarily be the goal. You can have one video that gets millions of views and it's a flash in the pan. But if you can build and sustain a community, that's really valuable.”

Corporates have the opportunity to tap into a specific, engaged audience. “My target audience is niche but engaged,” says Sam Ro, a financial news journalist who worked at major news outlets before branching out on Substack with his newsletter *TKer*. “My audience is smaller than it was at *Yahoo! Finance* or *Axios*, but most Wall Street analysts I quote are engaged subscribers to my publication.”

Business activity is already a hot topic for creators—with or without the engagement of the companies. Admani frequently listens to quarterly earnings calls and makes videos to cover the highlights. Scanlon’s newsletter is home to deep dives on everything from the dating app industry to automation and organized labor. “What Happens When Uber Doesn’t Have to Pay Drivers?” is a 10-minute video that took Andrews and the Maxinomics team 10 weeks to research and produce—with over 44 million rows of data analyzed. His recent short video investigating the economics of upscale fast-casual restaurants boasts more than 1.3 million views.

## Embrace the **CHANGE**

There is significant upside for corporates who become early participants in this space. As their reach and influence grows, so too will competition for the time, attention and energy of these hosts. Investing in relationships with them now will pay dividends down the road—from amplifying good news to mitigating reputational risk.

Learning how to navigate this new landscape may seem daunting but getting it right will be increasingly important. Treat newsfluencers like any other journalist, says Taylor Lorenz, a tech journalist who has long covered the creator economy and hosts a podcast on Vox Media.

“For so long, companies have had their press lists and the traditional media landscape, and it feels familiar,” Lorenz says. “So, when you deal with independent media, treat them with respect, give them the same level access, information or background materials on something as you would anybody else. And work really hard to develop those relationships because you’re going to need them down the line. These are people that have a lot of influence and ability to shape public perception.”

Whether a paid partnership, talking on background, inviting carefully vetted creators to events or facility tours, or giving embargoed access to highly select announcements with NDAs in place—the value of meeting audiences where they are with a voice they already trust will be a competitive advantage for corporates in this new news landscape. ♦

PATREON



JOE SMITH



Taylor Lorenz  
Host of Power User, Technology Journalist

TRENDLINES  
OVER  
HEADLINES



SAM RO, CFA  
Editor of *TKer.co*