

PUBLICS AND MEDIA CONSUMPTION

**NEWS CONSUMPTION AND DIGITAL PLATFORMS
IN PORTUGAL AND ANOTHER 10 COUNTRIES**



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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document consists of the first report on the ERC – Publics and Media Consumption project launched in late 2014 and the main purpose of which is to analyse the development of media consumption in Portugal. The development of this project is largely based on the execution of an annual survey at national level (mainland Portugal and the autonomous regions), aimed at getting to know the media consumption habits of the Portuguese population and the evolution of the same.

The ERC bylaws specify that one of the duties of the Regulatory Council, within the scope of its regulatory and supervisory functions, is “to guarantee the implementation of studies and other initiatives in relation to research and disclosure in the areas of social communication and content, within the scope of the promotion of the free exercise of expression and press and the critical use of means of social communication” (paragraph ab), N° 3, article 24 of the ERC bylaws).

The ERC – Publics and Media Consumption project falls within the exercise of this statutory requirement, striving to promote the awareness of the changes occurring with regard to the relationship of audiences with the means of social communication, as a means of ensuring, on the one hand, qualified information for the exercise of the regulatory duties of the ERC and, on the other, supplying this information to all the interested parties (public entities, associations, media personnel, entrepreneurs, researchers, teachers, students, citizens ...).

The first edition of the project focused on the analysis of news consumption on digital platforms. Hence, in addition to attempting to find out about media consumption in general terms, the first survey placed a particular emphasis on the habits of news consumers in their relations with the online media.

The questionnaire used in the Reuters Institute Digital News Report project, which consists of an annual analysis of media consumption on digital platforms in several different countries, was used as a reference to create the questionnaire.

The 2014 edition of the Digital News Report involved almost 19,000 respondents from 10 countries on different continents: Germany, Brazil (urban), Denmark, Spain, the United States of America, Finland, France, Italy, Japan and the United Kingdom.

The ERC requested the scientific support of a team of researchers from the Sociology Research and Study Centre – University Institute of Lisbon (CIES – IUL), with the aim of proceeding to adapt the Reuters Institute questionnaire to the national reality and to monitor the entity selected to implement the same in the field. Eurosondagem was the entity chosen by ERC to go ahead with the implementation of the national survey, in the form of face to face interviews with a sample of 1035 individuals, representative of the population residing in the country, of 15 years of age or more. The interviews were held between 20 September and 12 October 2014.

This report contains the results of the survey, which, as mentioned previously, was focused on finding out about habits in relation to the consumption of news and the use of digital platforms. In addition to the analysis at national level, whenever methodologically possible a comparative analysis at international level has been included based on data from the Reuters Institute 2014 Digital News Report.

The analysis conducted in this report, given the specific nature of its purpose, will centre above all on a sub-sample consisting of 625 respondents, identified during the implementation of the survey as people who use the Internet and hold some degree of interest in consuming news (see Chapter 2 – Methodology and Appendices A and B for a detailed explanation of the methodology).

The main conclusions arising from the survey are set forth below:

Internet access. The results of the ERC survey confirm the data registered by other national entities in relation to Internet access by the Portuguese population. The most significant data with regard to the same lies in the fact that around a third of the population resident in Portugal does not use the Internet (33%).

Seven out of every ten Portuguese citizens were found to be Internet users regardless of the appliance they use (67%). Although this represents a considerable majority, the figure is well below that registered in countries such as Denmark, (90%), Finland (89%) and the United Kingdom (84%).

Sending and receiving e-mails (92%), using the social networks (88%) and getting in touch with friends (72%) are the three principal activities conducted by the Portuguese on the Internet.

With specific regard to media consumption, it should be pointed out that seven in every ten Portuguese citizens use the Internet to “read press news on Facebook” (69%) and less than a quarter of the respondents “watch / listen to television or radio programmes” on the Internet (22%). Certain differences were registered in the use of the Internet in accordance with gender. For example, women use the Internet more to visit the social networks than men (90% x 85%). However, this difference narrows in relation to reading press news on Facebook (70% women x 71% men).

Interest in news. A frequência de consulta de notíInterest in news. The frequency of accessing news using offline means (television, radio and newspapers) is greater than the use of online means. The vast majority of Internet users access news via offline means “several times a days” (43%) and/or “once a day” (30%).

The frequency of accessing news via online means is slightly less, although the majority regard themselves as frequent consumers of online news: around one in every five respondents accesses news online “once a day” (21%) and around a third do so “several times a day” (33%).

Certain differences in relation to accessing news were registered in accordance with gender, whereby the percentage of men accessing news online “several times a day” was considerably higher than women (42% x 25%). In general terms, women consume news on a lesser scale.

Compared with the results of 10 countries analysed in the 2014 Digital News Report, the frequency of accessing news online among Portuguese audiences is significantly less than in the other countries. The percentage of users accessing news online “several times a day” in Japan, Denmark and Finland is more than double that registered in Portugal (33%).

However, when questioned on their interest in consuming news, the vast majority of the respondents declared they were “very interested” (39%) or even “extremely interested” (24%). Significant variations were registered in relation to interest in news in accordance with gender and age group. This data was similar to that registered in other countries analysed in the Reuters survey.

The most important topics. The three topics regarded as the most important are: “domestic news” (92%), “international news” (75%) and “news on health and education” (40%). Followed by “sports news” (37%), “news on the economy” and “news involving entertainment, society and celebrities”, (both of which registered 28%), and “news on art and culture” (26%).

Of particular note here is the low figure registered for the topic of “domestic politics” (14%), which reveals a trend which will be confirmed in due course in the chapter specifically dedicated to interest in news on politics and political involvement.

News consumption. In an attempt to clarify the changes observed with regard to news consumption, the first conclusion we can draw is that the traditional media, above all television, continues to comprise the principal means of information for consumers of Portuguese news.

More than nine in every ten respondents stated television news programmes as one of the resources they had used in the past week (93%). Newspapers arose as the third most used news resource (65%). While radio featured as a source of news for slightly more than a quarter of the respondents (28%).

Thus, there are apparently no major changes to register. However, when we take a closer look at the data arising from the influence of digital means we encounter a completely different reality. The role of the social networks in the processes involving the circulation and disclosure of news has proven to be one of the most expressive aspects of the disruptive effect caused by digital environments.

Over three in every five respondents use the social networks as a news resource (66%). In other words: in this context the social networks arise as the second most important means of accessing news, behind television news programmes and slightly ahead of printed newspapers.

News sites and newspaper applications are also resources used by the majority (54%), registering a higher result than thematic news channels (46%) and the so-called pure players, such as news portals, news aggregators and other online news agents (30%).

When asked about the news source they regard as the most important, television news programmes lead the way once again, quoted by 66% of the respondents as their main (or most important) source of news; television thereby maintaining the forefront as the principal news means, even among Internet users displaying some interest in consuming news.

“Sites and newspaper applications” and “printed newspapers” appear in second place a considerable way behind (8% each). Printed newspapers stand out above all as a “2nd source of news” (29%), followed by the social networks and (18%) and newspaper sites and applications (17%).

The majority of the respondents access news first thing in the morning (55%). The evening is also one of main times for accessing news, whereby over 40% of the respondents access news in the early evening or late at night.

Once again, television appears as the news means the Portuguese dedicate most time to on a daily basis: a third of the respondents spent over 60 minutes consuming news on the television the day before they answered the questionnaire (33%).

The computer arises as the second most used means for the most time for the consumption of news: around half of the respondents accessed news for over 21 minutes on the eve of answering the questionnaire (49%).

The most frequent time interval for accessing news in printed newspapers falls between 10 - 20 minutes (20%).

With regard to mobile devices, the smartphone stands out as the means the respondents used for most time to access news, although well behind the results obtained for the computer.

The consumption of news occurs largely in a domestic environment: more than nine in every ten respondents access news at home in a common area (93%); one in every four also stated home as the place they access news, albeit in a private area (26%). The most popular places for the consumption of news outside the home are public areas (32%) and the workplace (28%).

Television and the Internet on the computer are the news media which are most used in domestic environments (95% and 60% respectively), whereas the most used means for this purpose in private areas is the computer (60%). The smartphone is the third most used means for accessing news at home, both in common (16%) and private (28%) areas.

Outside the home, principally newspapers (79%), smartphones (22%) and magazines (13%) are most used in

public areas. The radio is practically unanimous in relation to personal transport (94%). While the smartphone leads the way in relation to public transport. The computer and newspapers are also the most used news means in the workplace (51% and 41% respectively).

With regard to the sources most used by the respondents “in the past week”, SIC was quoted as being the most used source of news among the television channels (68%), followed by TVI (63%) and RTP1 (42%), while RTP2 was cited by 12% of the respondents. The sequence of “brands” is the same with regard to the thematic news channels: SIC Noticias (45%), TVI24 (31%) and RTP Informacao (19%).

Among the television channels, it is the thematic information channels which are most used by the respondents on the Internet to consume news. However, as a rule access of televised news sources on the Internet is insignificant, suggesting that television channels in general do not figure as popular online news sources.

With regard to the radio, the three most accessed news sources in the “past week” were RFM (26%), Radio Comercial (16%) and Radio Renascença (11%), while TSF and Antena 1 received the same number of answers (7%).

It was also ascertained that few users turn to news broadcast on the radio on the Internet, to a far lesser extent than the television.

With regard to the printed press, the general daily newspapers *Jornal de Noticias* (44%) and *Correio de Manhã* (34%) led the way, followed by *Publico* (16%), *Diario de Noticias* (14%) and *Jornal I* (2%).

The sporting publications *A Bola* (17%), *Jornal Record* (11%) and *O Jogo* (9%) also figured as well represented press sources. The weekly press was led by *Expresso* (7%), followed by *Visao* (4%), *Sol* (2%) and *Sabado* (2%). Exclusively online newspapers registered low rates of frequency: *Noticias ao Minuto* (4%), *Expresso Diario* (2%), *Observador* (2%), *Dinheiro Vivo* and *Diario Digital* (1% each).

It should be noted that this data is the result of a survey conducted on a national scale, mirroring the experiences, opinions and perceptions of the respondents. As such, it should not be confused or compared with data arising from the implementation of procedures involving the assessment of audiences.

In brief, the most interesting conclusion to be stressed with regard to this point is the fact that newspapers figured as the news sources which the respondents most accessed on the Internet. Newspapers are, as it happens, practically the only means where the rate of exclusive offline use is far less than the rate of use of the same means on online platforms.

This data suggests that printed newspapers in Portugal (and in particular their original paper brands) possess a potential for the aggregation of audiences on digital platforms which is far greater than the other traditional means.

Devices. The desktop computer is the most used device for accessing the Internet (96%), followed by the smartphone (51%) and tablet (19%). The remaining online access devices are of little significance. The predominance of the aforementioned three devices has a decisive influence on the types of online news consumption.

The vast majority (almost everyone) use the computer to access news (95%), a little more than a third use the smartphone too (36%), and almost one in every five respondents also uses the tablet (17%). Age and gender are not factors which significantly determine different uses of these devices for accessing news.

With regard to multi-platform consumption, it was ascertained that two in every five respondents access online news using two devices (39%), whereby the majority use only one device (47%), and only one in every ten respondents claimed they used three devices (10%).

These results are very similar to those registered for the 10 countries analysed by the Reuters Institute and illustrate the importance mobile devices have assumed in the consumption of news, inevitably forcing media enterprises to increasingly base their strategies in accordance with a multi-platform perspective.

Furthermore, it is clear the phenomenon of news consumption using multiple devices does not actually represent a reduction in the importance of traditional news means. Regardless of using devices to consume news online, over 90% of the respondents are still consumers of televised news (93%) and more than 60% continue to read printed newspapers.

Videos and consumption formats. The large majority of consumers access news via the list of headlines on news site homepages (80%) and are willing to read longer articles (65%).

News videos are quoted as the third most used format for accessing content (61%). Moreover, news apps do not represent a popular means of accessing online news (3%).

A comparison with the international results reveals that the Portuguese respondents show a greater tendency to access news videos. Furthermore, the formats based on the written word are the predominant means of access in all the countries under analysis. Portugal also stands out as the country which registers the highest percentage for accessing news in live format (19%).

It was also established that the users of smartphones and tablets tend to access fewer longer written texts than those using a computer to consume news. Accessing news videos seems not to be influenced by the type of device used.

Paying for online news. The number of respondents who paid to access some kind of online news content in the last year was basically irrelevant (4 respondents). This figure is far lower than that registered in the countries analysed by the Reuters Institute, where the overall average of payment for online news is around 11%.

When questioned on their willingness to pay for online news content in the future, three in every four respondents regarded this as “unlikely” or “highly unlikely” (74%). One in every four responded “unlikely” (23%) and an extremely low percentage regarded this possibility as “highly likely” (3%).

Hence, if we consider as a whole all the intentions (even when remote) with regard to the purchase of online news content in the future, it is clear Portugal is one of the countries which registered a greater willingness to enter into purchasing agreements (26%) when compared with the countries analysed by the Reuters Institute.

Nevertheless, the results obtained underline the idea that there is still a long way to go before payment for the consumption of online news becomes a habit among Portuguese readers of news.

Impartiality. Three in every four respondents in Portugal preferred news in which the journalist provides several different points of view, leaving readers free to form their own opinion (75%). On the other hand, around a quarter of the respondents prefer news in which the journalist defends and justifies a point of view (23%).

Along the same lines, it was ascertained that the large majority place greater trust in news from social communication entities which present themselves as neutral and impartial (70%), whereby around a quarter of the respondents believe more in social communication entities which openly defend certain points of view (27%).

A comparison with the international results leads to the conclusion that the large majority of news consumers at global level are not prepared to abandon the idea of impartiality as a professional value underlying the activity of informative journalism.

Questioned on the importance placed on the “name of the social communication entity / news brand” and on “individually acclaimed journalists” as factors affecting the credibility of the news, both aspects were regarded as important and almost to the same extent (72% and 70% respectively).

In accordance with the international results, Portugal is the country where these two credibility factors (“brand” versus “acclaimed journalists”) are recognised to practically the same extent.

Social networks. The ERC survey leaves no doubt as to the major role the social networks have assumed with regard to the circulation and consumption of news. Besides being one of the main means of accessing news (66%) after televised news programmes (93%), the social networks are acknowledged as major news access platforms.

The social networks are recognised as being one of the main sources of acquiring knowledge of new news (69%). In relation to updates of news which is developing on a constant basis, the social networks are recognised as

being on a par with television as the main news source (73%). They are also of great importance in relation to accessing analyses or in-depth texts on news in constant development (64%).

Facebook is the most popular social network for accessing news: over 90% of the respondents who use the social networks to access news updates or news analyses and in-depth texts use Facebook.

YouTube is the second most used network for the consumption of news (36%) followed by Twitter with a far lower figure (7%).

The importance of these three social networks is similar to that registered in the other countries under analysis, although certain interesting differences exist.

Despite the fact Facebook is also the main network for accessing news in global terms, the weight it carries in Portugal is far higher than the global average of the 10 countries analysed in the Reuters Institute survey (76% x 35%). The same can be said for YouTube as a means of accessing news content (28% x 15%).

The opposite applies for Twitter, or in other words, the global average use of this news consumption network is slightly above that registered in Portugal (9% x 6%).

In brief, we can safely state that the social networks feature as one of the main platforms for accessing news, playing a decisive role in the level of disclosure and circulation among the different audiences.

This reality has a determining effect on the news disclosure chain, giving rise to players which in practice are major aggregators of content with an extraordinary range potential in terms of audiences, but over which social communication entities have little control.

News and politics. Politics is far from becoming a topic of choice among Portuguese news consumers. When questioned on their interest in political news, the majority replied “not very interested” (31%) or even “not at all interested” (22%). A third of the respondents declared to be “somewhat interested” (32%) and only a small percentage said they were “very interested” in political issues (15%).

Certain differences exist in accordance with gender, age group and level of education. Levels of interest in political news tend to be greater among male audiences (51% x 43%). The older age groups also tend to register greater levels of interest in this news topic. Moreover, the better educated echelons feature greater levels of interest in political news.

Portugal proved to be the country with the lowest levels of interest in political news, compared with the countries surveyed on this issue by the Reuters Institute, where those who are “very interested” always feature as the majority (Germany, 60%; USA, 55%; Denmark and Italy, 41%).

The main sources of information among the interested audiences on matters of politics and governance are

domestic newspapers (64%), radio and television broadcasts (57%), the social networks (40%) and contacts with friends, acquaintances and colleagues (39%); these figures do not distinguish between online and offline access.

The Portuguese respondents also registered a low rate of use of the Internet for involvement in politics. The large majority did not state any forms of online involvement in politics “in the past year” (65%). The most common activity among the respondents who confirmed some form of involvement was that of posting their points of view on the social networks (15%).

Online participation. Sharing news on the social networks is a common practice among online news consumers in Portugal: over half share news on the social networks on a weekly basis (55%).

Compared with the data supplied by the Reuters Institute, we can conclude that Portugal is the country in which this practice is most frequent, considerably ahead of the rest.

Sharing news via e-mail is also common: around a quarter of the respondents share news via e-mail on a weekly basis (23%).

Portuguese news consumers are those which post most comments online when compared with the countries analysed by the Reuters Institute. However, they prefer to do so on the social networks rather than directly on news sites: the frequency of comments on news on the social networks is far greater than that registered on news sites (39% x 19%).

With regard to other types of online participation, we may conclude that Portuguese audiences are little inclined to take part in online votes (6%) or campaigns / debate groups associated with current affairs (1%).

Compared with the other countries analysed, the interactivity of Portuguese news consumers with news sites shows a remarkable pattern: a quarter of the respondents published some kind of content (comment, photo...) in the past year, and used a profile capable of being associated with their real identity (25%).

In relation to direct interaction between readers and journalists, apparently made easier by online communication, the data obtained from the ERC survey illustrates that only a small percentage of news consumers use these features: 6% of the respondents declared to have contacted the author or social communication entity directly with respect to a news article, mostly with the intention of agreeing or disagreeing with the author’s point of view.

All the information generated within the scope of this project is available for free use for non-commercial purposes. Interested parties should request access to the information available on the ERC – Publics and Media Consumption database by sending an e-mail to the address publicos.consumos@erc.pt, stating the purpose of the use of the data.

