BRAZEN

UK MEDIA CONSUMPTION REPORT 2026

APRIL 2026

FOREWORD

We launched Brazen's first media consumption report in 2024 and after comparing the latest data with what came before, it's clear that the UK media landscape has continued to evolve at pace, just not in a singular direction as we might have anticipated.

In 2024, the year of Oasis' reunion and when Taylor Swift's Eras tour broke more than the internet, we saw a clear acceleration towards digital and social-first consumption. Data from The Reuters Institute Digital News Report, Ofcom, and Press Gazette showed online news reaching parity with broadcast, while social platforms became dominant among younger audiences and increasingly adopted by older groups.

At the same time, trust was becoming more fragmented. Concerns around misinformation, the rise of generative AI and the growth of influencer-led content were beginning to reshape how audiences validated information.

Fast forward to 2026 and what's most interesting is how these trends have matured, rather than accelerated uncontrollably like 2024's low budget Wonka pop up.

> Rather than replacing traditional media, digital behaviours have layered on top of it.

Ofcom's Media Nations 2025 and News Consumption in the UK 2025 show that broadcast, print and established publisher brands continue to play a critical role in trust, attention and influence.

At the same time, the way audiences access content has fundamentally changed. Generative search and AI-driven discovery are now among the biggest shifts in media behaviour. Search engines, aggregation and AI-generated summaries sit between publishers and audiences, meaning content is often consumed without a click or clear source attribution.

Which brings us to the shift that defines 2026.

Content may still be king, but it no longer rules alone. Context, environment and timing now complete the crown and ultimately determine whether content is seen, trusted or acted on.

> This presents a new challenge for marketeers. Not fragmentation, but visibility, clarity and trust within that fragmented system.

THE UK AUDIENCE LANDSCAPE

For the purpose of this mass-market report, we've bucketed UK consumers into two overlapping audiences. For more detailed analysis on your audience type, just reach out to Brazen's Planning & Strategy team.

1 ESTABLISHED HOUSEHOLDS

Typically aged 30+

Habit-driven media consumption

Strong engagement with broadcast and print

High trust in established news brands

Regular interaction with lifestyle, news, and advice-led content

These audiences value familiarity, authority and routine. Media is often consumed at fixed times of day and within shared household environments.

2 DIGITALLY FLUID AUDIENCES

Gen Z through to mid-40s

Mixed media consumption across platforms

High digital usage alongside continued engagement with traditional media

Strong reliance on search and social discovery

Still influenced by trusted editorial environments

In 2024, social media was firmly established as a primary news source, with over half of UK adults using it and 82% of 16 to 34 year olds relying on it according to the Reuters Institute Digital News Report and Ofcom.

Perception is what's shifted most here. As concerns around misinformation and AI-generated content have grown, audiences are increasingly turning to trusted editorial environments to validate what they see, a boomerang we didn't necessarily anticipate.

WHAT MEDIA PEOPLE ARE CONSUMING

BROADCAST

TV and radio continue to command significant daily attention across the UK.

According to **Ofcom's Media Nations 2025**, broadcast news remains one of the most trusted sources of information and linear TV continues to deliver high levels of shared viewing and attention.

In 2024, broadcast news had reached near parity with online sources, signalling a perceived decline in dominance. Data from Ofcom showed online news at 71% versus TV at 70%.

Broadcast has become a high-trust, high-attention environment that complements digital discovery rather than competing with it.

Broadcast delivers:

- Shared viewing moments
- Passive but high-attention environments
- Strong emotional receptivity
- High trust, particularly in news

PRINT AND NEWSBRANDS

Print circulation has declined structurally over the past decade. However, Ofcom reporting shows that trust in established print news brands has strengthened in recent years.

In our 2024 report, we identified a resurgence in print engagement, particularly among Gen X and Boomer audiences.

That momentum has evolved. In 2026, print's value lies less in scale and more in credibility, dwell time and its role in reinforcing trust within integrated campaigns.

Print delivers:

- High dwell time
- Lean-in reading
- Credibility by association
- Household pass-along readership
- Physical presence in shared spaces

National titles continue to provide broad reach, while weekend supplements create deeper engagement opportunities.

LIFESTYLE AND INTEREST MEDIA

TV and radio continue to command lifestyle titles and vertical content hubs remain highly influential across categories such as health, finance, home and personal wellbeing.

These environments are trusted for:

- Expert commentary
- Product testing
- Practical advice
- Problem-solving content

This aligns with findings from the Reuters Institute which highlight that audiences turn to specialist and lifestyle content when seeking guidance and reassurance, not just news.

PUBLISHER WEBSITES

Online news platforms now account for the largest share of news consumption time in the UK, according to Ofcom's News Consumption in the UK 2025.

They offer:

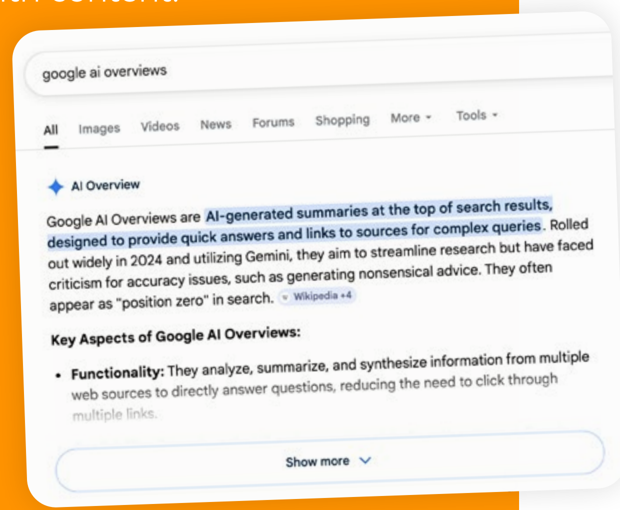
- Scale and frequency
- Strong visibility in search
- Fast turnaround of content
- Integration with lifestyle and service journalism

Audience measurement data from Ipsos iris highlights the scale of major UK publisher sites, particularly those with strong lifestyle and news verticals.

However, consumption behaviour is changing rapidly.

In 2024, 42% of UK audiences expressed concern about the impact of generative AI on misinformation according to Reuters Institute and Ofcom data.

By 2026, this is no longer theoretical. Industry reporting from Press Gazette and wider media analysis shows AI-generated summaries and Google AI Overviews are reducing click-through rates and changing how audiences engage with content.



A DAY IN THE LIFE

HOW AUDIENCES FEEL AND WHAT THEY'RE CONSUMING

MEDIA CONSUMPTION IS HIGHLY TIME-DEPENDENT, WITH DIFFERENT MINDSETS ACROSS THE DAY.

WHERE AUDIENCES ARE ACCESSING CONTENT

Consumption pathways are now fragmented and overlapping.

According to **Ofcom's Online Nation 2025**, digital consumption continues to grow alongside broadcast and print rather than replacing them.

Key routes include:

- Direct visits to publisher websites
- Search engines including AI-generated summaries
- Social and aggregator referrals
- Broadcast channels
- Physical print

Ofcom also highlights that audiences are often less aware of original sources when accessing content through intermediaries.

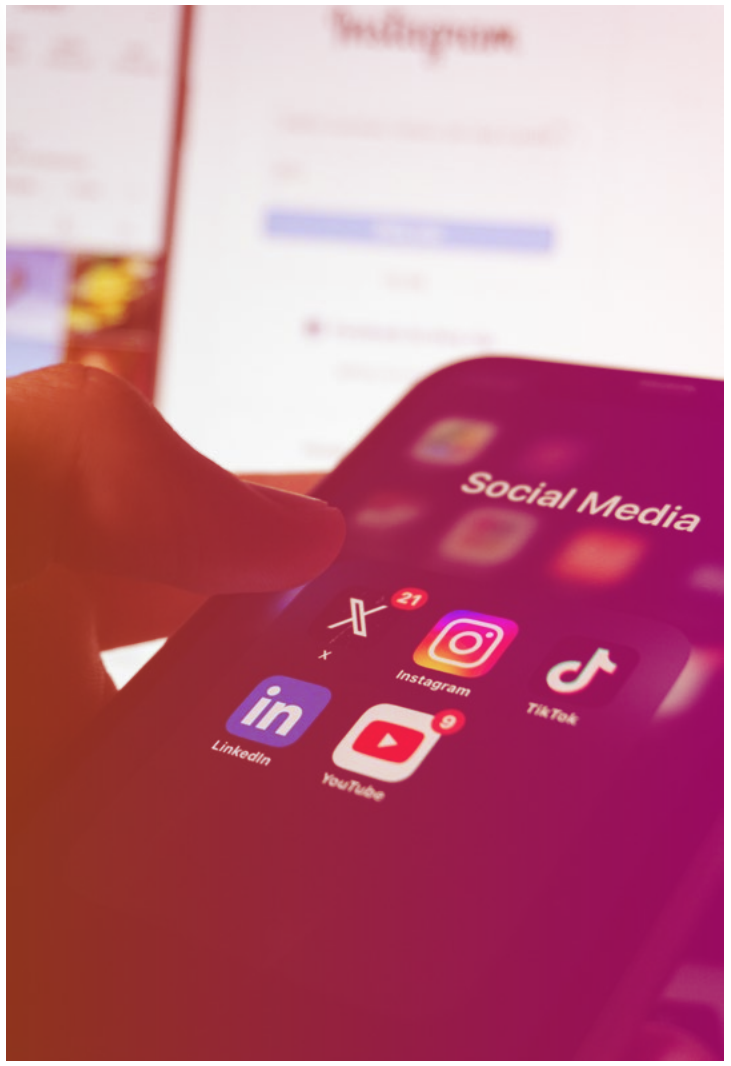
> For marketeers, this means brand messaging must be clear within the content itself.

WHY TRADITIONAL MEDIA STILL MATTERS

Despite digital growth, traditional media continues to align with core audience needs.

Key motivations include:

- Trust
- Reassurance
- Habit
- Depth
- Context



In 2024, influencer-led content and 'j-influencers' were seen as a way to bridge trust gaps.

In 2026, their role remains important but audiences are increasingly returning to expert-led editorial environments when making decisions or seeking reassurance.

KEY STRUCTURAL SHIFTS FOR MARKETEERS

1. TRUST IS CONCENTRATING

Print and broadcast carry disproportionate authority relative to their scale

2. DISCOVERY IS FRAGMENTED

Audiences access content via search, social and aggregation

3. SEARCH IS RESHAPING ENGAGEMENT

AI-generated summaries are changing how content is consumed

4. SOURCE VISIBILITY IS WEAKENING

Brand recognition must come from the content itself

5. CONTENT MAY STILL BE KING, BUT IT NO LONGER RULES ALONE

In 2026, context, environment and timing complete the crown

CONCLUSION

UK media consumption is not a shift from traditional to digital as we might have previously expected. It is a layered ecosystem where each channel plays a distinct role.

Broadcast delivers attention and emotional connection.

Print delivers trust and depth.

Publisher sites deliver scale and frequency.

Search delivers discovery, often without direct engagement.

What has changed since our first report in 2024 is not where audiences are but how they decide what to trust.

For more information or to delve deeper into your sector and audience, reach out to Brazen's Planning & Strategy department at planning@wearebrazenpr.com