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THE NEWS CONSUMPTION OF DIGITAL NATIVES

Master’s Thesis, Marketing

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ABSTRACT

Digitalization has shaped the newspaper market and nowadays the news consumption of people increasingly takes place in the online environment. At the same time when print newspapers can no longer be considered as the revenue drivers for media companies, especially digital natives remain reluctant to pay for news content in the digital media. As a result, the digitalization brought by the Internet is challenging the operations of media companies and they need to find new ways to attract consumers to using their services.

Digital natives represent a generation that has grown up surrounded by the digital technologies and got used to utilizing the Internet for information collection. So far, the research regarding the news consumption of the digital natives has been limited to the generation’s news consumption habits in traditional media. The purpose of this research is to investigate the news consumption behavior of the digital native generation in the digital environment. This research aims at revealing the factors that drive the news consumption habits of the digital natives. The study represents the qualitative approach to research. In order to answer the research problem, qualitative semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data. The respondents of the study consist of university students as they represent digital natives.

The results indicate that digital natives want to have control over the news they consume and what they pay for. The digital natives expect to be provided with alternatives and do not want a ready-made package – they want to customize. This study supports the findings of previous research by showing that digital natives place a high priority on fast speed and easiness of use when consuming news and expect all components in their news consumption process to fulfill such characteristics. According to this research both mobile and social media nowadays play an important role in digital natives’ news consumption and such characteristics positively contribute to their willingness to pay for online news. News content can be seen to highly impact digital natives’ willingness to pay as the digital natives are more interested in subscribing to news which is related to their lives. To conclude, taking into account these factors newspapers can better serve the segment of digital natives.

Keywords
Digital natives, news consumption, digital media

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1 INTRODUCTION

Today, the Internet can be seen as one of the most crucial infrastructures existing in the contemporary society (Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy, 2014). Initially a group work tool used mainly by scientists, the Internet has become an international information space with a multitude of users (Anderson, 2007), and the modern information and communication technologies are reforming the economies, governments and societies around the world (The World Bank, 2014). Alongside the expansion of the Internet the ability to access information and commerce on a global scale has become significantly easier (Thomas, 2011, 1). The widespread use of the Internet has also enabled the creation of new opportunities for communicating and obtaining information – nowadays we have various software at hand, making it possible for us to easily present our point of views, comment and cooperate with other people, and simply to socialize (Szekely & Nagy, 2011). Furthermore, in the digital environment in which we live in today, digital communication methods, such as instant messaging, email, and mobile technologies, have become prominent, enabling individuals to access several information sources despite timing and geographical location (Autry & Berge, 2011).

Digitalization has changed our communicative system, with the media landscape also having experienced meaningful alterations (Castellón, 2012). The development of the Internet has significantly affected newspaper publishing (Flavián & Qurrea, 2006). As a result of the interconnected digital media that now possesses a prominent role in society, the assortment and type of news sources available and the capability of people to share their ideas and experiences in a wide variety of matters has gone through a significant modification. The modern media landscape has created a myriad of new opportunities for learning, social connection and entertainment. (Flanagin & Metzger, 2008, 5.) It is suggested that the information consumption of consumers has gone through two remarkable changes: firstly, former readers have become computer users. Secondly, alongside the expansion of information technology, the new technologies developed have enabled the movement from traditional print media to the use of digital screen. (Koufaris, 2002.) Having grown up surrounded by digital technologies (Vodanovic, Sundaram & Myers, 2010), especially the youth easily master the use of the modern technologies (Bennet, Maton & Kervin, 2008) but also adults of all ages are increasingly utilizing the new possibilities brought by these technological advancements (Rowlands, Nicholas, Williams, Huntington & Fieldhouse, 2008).

Currently, the web environment, Web 2.0, which is based on users’ cooperation and self-expression, is seen as the most exciting area of the digital world (Szekely & Nagy, 2007). This online environment is defined as a group of open-source, interactive Web technologies managed by users, that enlarge the users’ knowledge as well as their power as market players. What is more, it is this user-generated content that differentiates Web 2.0 technologies from
previously developed Internet applications (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008) and at the moment, Web 2.0 social platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube have come to play a major role in individuals’ everyday activities, not only in the online context but also in terms of the entire community life (Szekely & Nagy, 2011). These social networks are no longer just a means of socializing with friends and family. Instead, they have become a way to stay connected to wider society: they represent a way to obtain information and discuss it, keep up-to-date on what is going on around the world, get entertained, message, and follow interesting topics. (Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research & American Press Institute, 2015.)

In a short time period the Internet has brought sudden changes to society in which we live in (Wilson, Wallin & Reiser, 2003) and comprehensively changed the daily lives of individuals. A shift towards conducting daily activities in the online environment is visible as people increasingly interact, learn, and carry out their transactions with the help of digital technologies. The digital landscape is now utilized for various purposes; for entertainment, shopping, playing, and for taking part in social and economic activities. (Ikepeze, 2015, 50.)

As today’s youth have grown up in a digital environment in which the use of ICTs is widespread (Vodanovic, Sundaram & Myers, 2010), it can be stated that their lives have been shaped by such technologies. As Tapscott (2009, 10) suggests, the digital landscape has profoundly affected the thinking patterns of the youth, and even changed the functioning of their brains. The youth of today have been exposed to a larger amount of information both on a global as well as on a local scale compared to older generations at the same age. Young people have come of age being socialized in a different way than their parents some decades ago, and also got used to a different lifestyle. The contemporary technological environment is far from the environment the parents of the youth grew up in (Autry & Berge, 2011).

A multitude of labels have been developed to describe the generation born in the era in which the Internet dominated technologies started to take over: the digital natives, the Net Generation, and the Millennials, to name a few. All these names are used to characterize the generation of today’s young people that is believed to be qualitatively different from previous generations, as their attitudes, abilities and expectations, as well as ways of communicating with each other and obtaining information, significantly differ from those of earlier generations. (Rowlands, Nicholas, Williams, Huntington & Fieldhouse, 2008.)

The digital environment affects the way individuals interact with each other, and the way they lead their lives (Lee & Delli Carpini, 2010). The digital natives have adapted to the new media environment in a lot more exhaustive manner than previous generations (Kilian, Hennings & Langner, 2012). Today, the media consumption of the youth increasingly happens via the contemporary information and communications technologies (Szekely & Nagy, 2011) and the most widely used media among the digital natives is the Internet (NAS Insights, 2014). The young adults prefer media sources which can be read
on-screen at the same time enabling the utilization of multimedia content (Veinberg, 2014).

The changing media consumption patterns cause problems for traditional newspapers (Domingo & Heinonen, 2008) as an increasing amount of people nowadays utilizes the Internet and mobile technologies for obtaining news information (Veinberg, 2014). Instead of reading the print form, several people now rely on tablets and other electronic devices for staying informed (The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, 2012) and it has been claimed by several experts that the Internet acts as a threat to the traditional news sources, such as to print newspapers (Ahlers, 2006). In addition to the changes in the consumption of traditional news media, also online news sources have undergone notable changes. Firstly, the use of mobile devices as a means of obtaining news information is on the rise. Secondly, the importance of social networking sites as news platforms has increased significantly (The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, 2012) and at the moment social networks play a massive role in the digital lives of today’s youth (Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research & American Press Institute, 2015).

As the consumption of news among people, especially young adults, has increasingly shifted from traditional media to the digital environment (Chyi, 2013), the circulation rates of print newspapers have declined (Ahlers, 2006). This can be seen as a challenge for newspapers, since as people have got used to receiving information for free on the Internet, they remain reluctant to start paying for such content (Rettie, 2002). Consequently, it has been evidenced that charging for news information online is difficult (McDowell, 2011). As the preferences and interests of today’s youth are different from those of previous generations (Frand 2000), the news providers need to increasingly take into account young people’s preferred news format as well as the content in which they are interested in, in order to be able to engage the generation in the future (Crispin, 2011).

Up to date, the majority of studies on digital natives has focused on the youth population in the U.S. (Bolton, Parasuraman, Hoefnagles, Migchels, Kabadayi, Gruber, Komarova Loureiro & Solnet, 2013). Moreover, when it comes to investigating people’s news consumption behavior, the majority of academic studies have concentrated on the overall adult population instead of studying the news consumption patterns of young people (Zerba, 2011). Furthermore, in instances in which young people’s news consumption behavior has been studied, the focus has been rather on their reasons for avoidances of reading print newspapers (e.g. Zerba, 2011) than on their consumption of online media. As Chyi and Lee (2013) state, consumers’ somewhat unenthusiastic reaction to the online subscription modes is still unsolved. This research aims at delving into the news consumption behavior of young adults in the Finnish newspaper market, with a special focus on online news sources and the digital media. As the news consumption behavior of individuals is a culture specific phenomenon (Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2015) the findings
of the studies conducted in the U.S. can only be used as a guidance when considering the news consumption behavior of digital natives in Finland. Consequently, this study is important as it aims at producing information on how digital natives in Finland consume different news media and what factors drive their news consumption behavior. Furthermore, as digital newspapers have not fully succeeded in attracting the youth to their services and as consumers’ unenthusiastic reaction to online subscription models remains unsolved (Chyi & Lee, 2013), this research can be considered meaningful as it aims at revealing points in which the interest of digital natives in subscribing to a digital newspaper could be increased. Moreover, the current study will contribute to the existing literature on digital natives’ news consumption behavior by aiming at revealing the characteristics possessed by an ideal digital newspaper from the viewpoint of digital natives. Such an objective is meaningful as it will assist media companies in redesigning their digital newspapers in order to better appeal to the digital generation. All in all, as the youth of today are the next generation to consume news media (Zerba, 2011), a deep investigation of their preferences seems rational.

1.1 Research objectives and research questions

The purpose of this study is to investigate the news consumption behavior of young adults in the contemporary media environment. As digital technologies nowadays play a major role in the lives of the youth (Lee & Delli Carpini, 2010), of special interest for this work is the news consumption of digital natives in the online media. Prior research on individuals’ avoidances of print newspapers has mainly focused on the overall adult population (Zerba, 2011). Touching the news consumption of older generations this study will concentrate on revealing the non-use reasons among young adults and draw conclusions on how the youth could be attracted to subscribing to online news. In order to gain a proper understanding on the generation on the focus the study will examine the various definitions developed by different authors and researchers to describe the population of today’s young people and, at the same time, determine how the youth today consume news as well as what their preferences and dislikes in terms of news content and payment methods are. Overall, this study will aim at finding out what the factors determining digital natives’ news consumption are.

The three sub-research questions will dive deeper in the news consumption behavior of young adults. The first sub question will investigate in detail the way in which the generation consumes news in the context of digital media and what news sources the youth prefer to use. As it has been suggested that nearly all digital natives utilize social media platforms on a daily basis and the use of web portals as a means of obtaining news information is rather high (Vercic & Vercic, 2013), the first sub-question also aims at revealing whether the respondents acknowledge social media as a news delivering platform. As price is oftentimes considered a major player in determining the
consumption habits of consumers (Kenesei & Todd, 2003) the second sub-question aims at finding out how pricing of news may increase or decrease the news readership among young adults. Moreover, the objective is to determine what kind of news package in terms of price and content would be optimal for digital natives, and would encourage them to purchase a newspaper in the online format. The third sub question investigates what kind of role news content has in determining digital natives’ news consumption decisions, as well as aims at finding out the preferences regarding news content the digital natives possess.

The main research problem is:
*What factors play a role in digital natives’ consumption of digital news?*

The research questions are:
1. *How do digital natives consume news in digital media?*
2. *What kind of role news price plays in digital natives’ news consumption?*
3. *What kind of role news content plays in digital natives’ news consumption?*

### 1.2 Structure of the study

This study consists of six chapters. The study begins with an introduction that explains the backgrounds of the research. The introduction discusses the development of the Internet and the ways in which it has altered our lives with regard to obtaining news information, as well as gives a general view of the changing media landscape we currently live in. The first chapter also introduces the objectives and research problems of the study. The second chapter begins the literature review. Firstly, the digital native generation which is the age group this study focuses on, is presented and the different labels used to categorize this generation are discussed. Attention is paid to digital natives’ relationship with technology. Moreover, a brief review on other generational cohorts and their news consumption habits is introduced in order to better understand the uniqueness of the digital generation. The second chapter ends with a presentation on the contradictory arguments of the whole idea behind the digital native concept. After going through the theory on digital natives the news consumption behavior of young people is discussed. The third chapter first delves into young adults’ news consumption in both online and offline media. After going through their habits regarding news media use the effects of cost and age on the consumption of news are presented. The theoretical part then continues by introducing current trends in the news consumption behavior of digital natives as well as the interests of the digital generation regarding news content. A summary of the literature review can be found at the end of chapter three.
The fourth chapter explains the methodology of the study. The chapter describes in detail the chosen research approach as well as explains the way the empirical data was gathered and analyzed. The fifth chapter presents the empirical results received through individual interviews. The final chapter of the study, the conclusion, pulls together the main findings and presents a research summary. The chapter also includes a discussion in which the prior empirical findings are compared to the findings of the current study. Furthermore, managerial implications are presented. At the end, the quality of the study is assessed by discussing the study reliability and validity. The study ends with a presentation of study limitations and suggestions for further research.
2 DIGITAL NATIVES

2.1 Definition of digital natives

Several labels have been developed to describe the generation of today’s young people (Helsper & Eynon, 2010) growing up in the global environment of information and communications technology (Hall, 2009). The definitions most commonly known are Tapscott’s Net Generation (2008), Prensky’s digital natives (2001) and Oblinger & Oblinger’s Millennials (2005) (Jones, Ramanau, Cross & Healing, 2009), all of which are commonly referred to in today’s academic literature (for example Autry & Berge, 2011). Other often used terms to describe the same generation include, for instance, Generation Y, Generation D, and iGeneration (Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008). Regardless of the variations in the way these generations are named there exists a general descriptive unanimity among academics concerning these generations (Eisner, 2005). The term digital native is perhaps the most broadly used expression in circulation (International Telecommunication Union, 2013) and will therefore be used in this study to describe the generation born to the world dominated by digital technologies.

The concept of digital natives was first introduced by Prensky (2001), who makes a distinction between the generation born prior to the digital age and the generation having grown up with technology, calling the former digital immigrants and the latter digital natives. The term digital native refers to people born after 1980 when social digital technologies entered the online environment. Having grown up in a world of networked digital technologies, the digital natives have an inherent ability to use such technologies (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008, 1) and young people in general are fluent in using the modern technologies, such as smart phones and tablet computers (Ripley, 2013). According to Prensky (2001), the youth are native speakers of the digital language. In general, digital natives are characterized by their utilization of and familiarity with contemporary digital technologies, communications and social networks (Dumeresque, 2012).

Based on Prensky’s (2001) work, Szekely and Nagy (2011) have summed up the characteristics typical for digital natives. Firstly, the digital generation has an inherent ability to absorb information extremely quickly. What is more, the generation is adept at multitasking as it succeeds in performing several tasks simultaneously. For digital natives, working in a network is the preferred mode of working and the generation values images and sounds over plain text. Finally, the attitude of digital natives towards technology is positive, as they see the new technologies as a friend, not something inconvenient they are obliged to work with.

In 2009, Prensky also introduced the term Homo Sapiens Digital or Digital Human, to describe the generation of today’s young people. According to Prensky, there are two main aspects that differentiate Digital Human from
other people. Firstly, Digital Human sees digital enhancement as a crucial fact for human existence. This appears in two ways: both in the way Digital Human uses digital enhancements to supplement his intrinsic abilities as well as in the way Digital Human utilizes such improvements to alleviate decision making processes. This digital wisdom is especially typical for digital natives (Prensky, 2009). Next, in order to obtain a proper understanding on the generation in focus of the study some of the other labels used to characterize the tech-savvy generation are explained in more detail.

2.1.1 Net Generation

The Net Generation put forward by Tapscott (1998), refers to the generation born between 1977 and 1997 (Tapscott, 2009, 16) which has grown up in a world characterized by interactivity and high-speed connections. The Net Generation is used to acquiring information via smart phone which can also be used to surf the Internet, take pictures, and communicate with others via text messaging. (Tapscott, 2009, 3.)

The ability to utilize such technological innovations in their daily lives has changed the way this generation acts, as well as modified the functioning of their brains. As a result of being constantly connected to other people worldwide, the Net Generation is said to be the first truly global generation. For Net Geners, technology is something necessary, and they find it impossible to imagine life without it. (Tapscott, 2009, 16-23.)

The Net Geners are characterized as being active readers and writers and energetic in making initiatives, collaborating, and organizing. The generation can be seen to be adept at multitasking, as while watching television they surf the Internet and communicate with each other. (Tapscott, 2009, 20-21.) This is a generation that tends to use their cell phones for various daily activities; the devices function as alarm clocks as well as GPS devices. The Net Generation relies on the Internet for learning, finding information and for communicating with each other. (Tapscott, 2009, 3-9.) For the Net Generation, computers are more than just a tool: the generation sees the Web as a way to gather together with their peers (Tapscott, 2009, 18).

Rather than interacting with each other solely in the physical world, the Net Geners prefer communication in the online environment through social networks, such as Facebook. The Net Geners prefer to be constantly connected to their peers, and they utilize the modern technologies, such as smart phones and social networks, to succeed in this. (Tapscott, 2009, 40) Regardless of a common belief of the new technologies isolating the youth, the increased use of the Internet is not, however, an indication of the lack of social skills of the generation. No longer is the computer used for information purposes only, it has become a communication tool as well. The Net Generation nowadays utilizes the contemporary technologies to engage in social intercourse. (Tapscott, 2009, 106-107.)

Eight norms that define the Net Geners as a generation have been suggested to exist: freedom, customization, scrutiny, integrity, collaboration,
entertainment, speed, and innovation. Firstly, the Net Generation is considered to give a high priority on freedom, choice and variety. Secondly, on the contrary to purchasing mass-produced products Net Geners are used to customizing their purchases. Scrutiny, on the other hand, refers to the habit of the Net Generation to closely examine the information they encounter, resulting from the fact of being exposed to competing messages from various different media. Net Geners are a generation that values integrity. They value discretion, honesty and transparency. The Net Generation can be considered as natural collaborators. They want to keep in touch with their friends all the time, and collaborate with each other for work or just to amuse themselves. Entertainment, on the other hand, refers to the generation’s willingness to be entertained. Moreover, as the Net Generation has grown up in the digital era, they have a tendency to expect that everything happens at a fast speed. The generation has witnessed the technology become increasingly faster and places a high priority on rapid replies, action and decisions. If faced with slowness, the Net Geners easily become annoyed and even angry. Therefore, speed is of utmost importance to the generation. The last norm, innovativeness, reflects the Net Generation’s expectations towards change. As new technologies have been introduced at a fast pace and at regular intervals during their lives, they expect similar pattern to continue, and want to get hold of the latest and best appliances also in the future. (Tapscott, 2009, 74-96.).

2.1.2 Millennials

Millennials is the term coined by Howe and Strauss (2000). The term refers to the generation born after 1982 (Rickes, 2009). Also Oblinger and Oblinger (2005) use the term Millennials obtaining Howe and Strauss’ view of the Millennial student. What differentiates the authors’ definitions from each other is, however, the dates they consider to bracket the generation. While Oblinger and Oblinger (2005) place a strict end date of 1991 to the Millennial generation, Howe and Strauss (2000) extend the time frame into the beginning of 2000s (Jones, Ramanau Cross & Healing, 2010).

Based on Howe and Strauss’ (2000) work, Benckendorff, Moscardo and Pendergast (2010, 9) describe the seven characteristics typically possessed by the Millennial generation. Such characteristics associated with Millennials are: special, sheltered, confident, team-oriented, conventional, pressured, and achieving. Firstly, as a result of their comprehensive digital capabilities Millennials consider themselves special. This feeling of specialty is mostly a result of repeated, supportive messages the Millennials are exposed to through different media (Rickes, 2009). Millennials are said to be sheltered, as they have grown up enjoying the protection of their parents as well as the community as a whole. As a generation that has grown up during the years when several laws concerning health and wellbeing were set, Millennials place a high priority on safety issues. Millennials represent a generation that accepts and is not afraid of uncertainty. The generation has grown up enjoying a rather solid economic base, and therefore possesses a high amount of confidence and optimism.
Experiences of Millennials about team activities during the early stages of their lives are likely to expose the generation to teamwork in the future. The Millennials are considered as rather conventional by nature as their objectives focus on career and finding a balance in life. Furthermore, the generation can be seen as constantly being under pressure as a large part of their days is filled with mandatory activities. Finally, the last trait possessed by the Millennial generation is related to achievement. Millennials are characterized as being the most education-minded generation ever. The generation highly attributes the relationship between education and succeeding in life. (Benckendorff et al., 2010, 9-10.) All in all, Millennials possess a strong desire for achievement (Monaco & Martin, 2007).

2.1.3 Generation Y

The population of today’s young people has also been labeled Generation Y as it follows upon the heels of the previous generation, Generation X (Black, 2010). Previously, the characterizations of generations were formed on the basis of factors such as the population’s attitude towards work, politics, free time and personal values. When it comes to Generation Y, however, skill-based attributes have been used to define the nature of the generation. This kind of a change in the way the generation is characterized results from the belief that ongoing exposure to various forms of technology starting from an early age without a doubt means that adolescents are capable of using the technology to find and utilize information efficiently. (Coombes, 2009.)

Having grown up in a world of information transparency and having got used to instant satisfaction offered by modern technologies Generation Y is frequently described as being rather straightforward, impatient and suspicious compared to older generations. Currently, a clear agreement on the start and end points for Generation Y are lacking. (Bolton et al., 2013.) Generation Y individuals have been suggested to having been born as early as 1977 (Parment, 2013). Crampton & Hodge (2009), on the other hand, define Generation Y as people born between 1980 and 1999.

2.1.4 Generation C

Generation C is the term used to describe the population that is adept at creating and sharing its own user-generated content and being connected by it. Generation C is expert at deploying digital content and stands out from the crowd by its ability to create networks and relationships, and ultimately its whole identity around digital content. Social networks act as a primary example of the way Generation C utilizes digital content for self-expression as they are the platforms in which this generation collaborates, communicates, and connects with other members of the generation. What distinguishes Generation C from the other ways of defining today’s tech-savvy population is that it is a generation that is not tied to a specific age range but instead crosses the age
divide. Although the definition does not place a particular age range for people belonging to it, Generation C is mostly made up of digital natives. (Dye, 2007.)

Despite the varying names a factor unifying the different ways of defining the generation of today’s young people is that they are qualitatively different from previous generations. They are different in terms of their skills, attitudes and expectations. Furthermore, they possess different communication and information literacy. (Rowlands, Nicholas, Williams, Huntington & Fieldhouse, 2008.) The different ways of defining the digital generation are summarized in table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Created/used by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generation Y</td>
<td>No clear start and end dates, suggested to have been born between 1980-1999. Skill-based attributes used to define the generation. Characterized as straightforward, impatient, and suspicious.</td>
<td>Crampton &amp; Hodge, 2009 Bolton et al., 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation C</td>
<td>Year of birth not used to define the generation. People who create their networks and relationships and even their identity around digital content.</td>
<td>Dye, 2007</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.2 The relationship of the digital generation with technology

Digital natives represent a generation that has got used to being able to access a multitude of modern technologies. Coming from media-rich households, this generation confidently masters the use of such technologies, and uses the Internet as a primary means for conducting information search as well as for performing various learning-related activities. (Helsper & Eynon, 2010.) Representing the first generation to grow up with technology, and having been exposed to visual electronic media since birth, digital natives are used to instant hypertext, communication taking place via mobile and instant messaging, and obtaining information via a laptop. The modern technological environment and the multitude of interactions with technology have led the digital native generation to think and process information differently from its predecessors. (Black, 2010.)

Digital natives obtain exquisite knowledge of contemporary information and communication technologies (ICT) and delicately master the use of such technologies. They have grown up to rely on technology for communication activities as well as data collection. (Bennet et al., 2008.) It has become commonplace for the digital natives to carry cell phones and laptop computers, as well as other personal digital assistants, with them almost all the time (Vodanovic, Sundaram & Myers, 2010). For digital natives, online spaces are as comfortable as the offline environment and they consider their hybrid lives as something completely normal (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008, 5).

Also Palfrey and Gasser (2008, 4) point out the role of digital technologies in the lives of digital natives. They suggest that the amount of time spent using digital technologies, the tendency to utilize the digital technologies in order to access information, as well as the tendency to manifest themselves with the help of such technologies, are practices that characterize digital natives as a generation. For this generation, the new digital environment acts as a primary intermediary for communication between people.

2.3 Comparison with previous generations

During the past decade, there has been a growing interest in determining the characteristics that differentiate the digital natives from earlier generations (Spector, Merrill, Elen, 2013, 820). Digital immigrants, which is a term coined by Marc Prensky (2001) to describe the people born before the digital age, grew up in an world that was less advanced in terms of technology, than the environment we now live in (Autry & Berge, 2011). Digital natives, on the other hand, are said to possess an innate understanding of digital technologies, something that the previous generations, such as Generation X and Baby Boomers, are lacking (Ripley, 2013). For digital natives, receiving and filtering enormous amounts of information is commonplace (Long, 2005).
On the basis of Prensky’s (2001) research on digital natives, Autry and Berge (2011) suggest the digital natives speak their own language. Digital technologies, such as computers and smart phones, are appliances the generation of digital natives has got used to dealing with on a daily basis. The adolescence years of the generation heavily differ from those of their parents': the digital landscape the digital natives have grown up in is filled with various forms of digital technologies and means of communication enabled by such technologies. The highly technological environment the digital natives have got used to is a completely different world compared to the one theirs parents grew up in.

The digital natives are creative and they express themselves differently than their parents did at a similar age. Digital natives see information as malleable, and consider it something they can have control over and reshape it to match their preferences. Digital natives implement such practices by creating profiles on social networking sites, making movies or online videos, and editing encyclopedia entries. This means that the generation of today’s young people now possesses some control over the cultural environment it leads a life in, and this is something that has not happened with previous generations. (Palfrey & Gasser, 2009, 6). Furthermore, for digital immigrants, functionality is of utmost importance. When it comes to digital natives, nevertheless, factors such as interactivity, connectivity and flexibility play as important a role as functionality. (Vodanovich et al. 2010.)

Generational cohorts are groups of people born during a certain time period and who are, as a result of common, shared experiences, considered to be similar in nature (Parry & Urwin, 2010). The experiences undergone during the early stages of one’s life generate habits that can last the whole lifespan of an individual. Having shared strong experiences during their formative years, such individuals can be considered to possess common attitudes as well as be similar in terms of consumer behavior, thereby forming lifelong cohorts (Meredith & Schewe, 1994). Strauss and Howe (1997) have suggested that a cohort can be characterized as a group that shares attitudes, beliefs and values regarding family, way of life, roles of men and women, and religion (Arsenault & Patrick, 2008). Worth of noting is that although closely linked, a generation and a cohort are not synonyms: while birth year is usually used to define a generation, a more suitable way to define a cohort is by the events that take place during a group’s lifetime. When a generation usually lasts as long as it takes for individuals to grow up, that is 20 to 25 years approximately; a cohort may be significantly longer or shorter, depending on the events that define its existence. (Meredith & Schewe, 1994.)

According to Young and Hinesly (2012), Howe and Strauss (1991) provide the most comprehensive analysis of generational cohorts up to this point. On the basis of Howe and Strauss’ (1991) research today’s workforce can be divided into four groups: the Silent Generation, the Baby Boomers, Generation X and the Millennials (Brosdahl & Carpenter, 2011). A similar characterization has been suggested by Lancaster and Stillman (2002). Next, the
three generational cohorts that precede the Millennial generation will be discussed in more detail on the basis of the work of Howe and Strauss (1991) and Lancaster and Stillman (2002).

2.3.1 The Silent Generation

The Silent Generation, also called the Matures, was born between the years 1925 and 1942. According to Strauss and Howe (1991), the Silent Generation possesses strongly middle-age values. (Brosdahl & Carpenter, 2011). The Silent Generation is best characterized as being loyal. Already at an early age the generation learned to put the needs of the group ahead of those of the individual in order to reach common goals. The Silent Generation represents a group that has a strong faith in institutions, such as the church and the government, and believes in the ability of such institutions to create change. (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002.)

Having grown up in the era of World War II the technology that mostly shaped the Silent Generation was the radio (Murphy, 2007). As the generation was well into its career when the digitalization started to take over, not all members of the Silent Generation have used the digital technologies. Many of them may initially express fear towards engaging in using such technologies. Despite the fact that the Silents want to learn from manuals or obtain detailed instructions, the generation, however, takes a curious and open attitude towards the new technologies. (Salkowitz, 2008, 67.)

2.3.2 The Baby Boomers

The Baby Boomers are the largest single generation, and significantly larger than the following generation, Generation X (Ansbach, 2006). The Boomers came into being between 1943 and 1960 (Brosdahl & Carpenter, 2011). The formative years of the Baby Boomer Generation were characterized by global rebuilding and reversible economic situation: during the time optimism and future-orientation prevailed (Murphy, 2007). Representing a vast generation, the Boomers had an impact on each market they entered in (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002), and the huge size of the generation made the Boomers extremely competitive in all areas of their lives (Allen, 2004).

Based on Howe and Strauss’ (1991) characterization, Brosdahl and Carpenter (2011) state that the Boomers are spiritual, nonconformist, rebellious, as well as interested in running their own interest instead of that of the community as a whole. What is more, the Boomers represent a generation that is known for idealistic thinking (Brosdahl & Carpenter, 2011). When it comes to interacting with others, the Boomers highly appreciate face-to-face communication and for them moving to another office location to get an answer to a question is not a problem. This differentiates the Boomers from newer generations as younger people tend to favor the communication mode that is the most efficient one. (SHRM, 2004.) Adopting Lancaster and Stillman’s model
of generational differences (2002) Reeves and Oh (2007) suggest that the Baby Boomers are a generation with an optimistic attitude. The Boomers believe in their possibilities and idealistically aim at making the world a better place. They are hard-working, and believe in their possibilities to develop themselves.

Basing their view on an article by Community Banker (2000), Kumar and Lim (2008) suggest that Baby Boomers accept new technologies with a more open-minded attitude than previous generations and rather well master the use of modern technologies. However, Boomers’ intentions to use such technologies usually differ from the intentions of newer generations. The most important technological invention introduced during the birth years of the Baby Boomers was undoubtedly the television (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). The introduction of the television is what shaped the generation of Baby Boomers more than any other invention (Tapscott, 2009, 13).

2.3.3 Generation X

Howe and Strauss (2000) named the generation following the Boomers “the 13th generation”, most often referred to as Generation X. This is a generation that was born between 1961 and 1981 (Brosdahl & Carpenter, 2011), and is remarkably media-centered and communicates aggressively. Generation X is the oldest segment whose technology habits resemble the Internet customs of the digital generation. Just like digital natives, Generation X is likely to see radio, television, and the Internet as commodity available for each citizen. (Tapscott, 2009, 15.)

During their lives Generation X has witnessed the introduction of a myriad of technologies. Technological inventions, such as cell phones, microwaves, VCRs, fax machines, and cable, satellite and digital TV, and most significantly, the personal computer, have all been discovered during the lives of Gen Xers. (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002.) Until being passed by Gen Y, Generation X is said to be the most educated generation ever. Education being the single most trustworthy indicator of a person’s spending habits, and taking into account Gen Xers’ high education levels, it can be suggested that Generation X is rather watchful when it comes to price, quality and companies’ advertising efforts. What is more, having got used to using technological devices the Generation X feels comfortable using the modern technologies for shopping purposes. (Dunne & Lusch, 2010, 94.)

While Lancaster and Stillman (2002) define Baby Boomers as optimistic, the Gen Xers, who represent a relatively small part of the workforce, are characterized as being skeptical as they believe more in themselves than in any institution. Generation X tends to think globally and is aware of diversity (Reeves & Oh, 2007).

2.3.4 Second generation of digital natives

The most recent literature has suggested that there now exists a second generation of digital natives. This kind of a new categorization can be
considered to have resulted from the rise of Web 2.0 applications (Helsper & Eynon, 2010) which refer to highly interactive platforms that enable users to combine various media within their own content creation (Williams, Crittenden, Keo & McCarty, 2012). Web 2.0, including social applications such as YouTube, MySpace and Flickr, offers an interactive and collaborative environment for users, highlighting shared intelligence and social interaction (Murugesan, 2007).

The teenagers born after the year 1990 represent the second generation of digital natives while adolescents born between 1983 and 1990 belong to the first generation. What distinguishes the two generations from each other are the second generation’s familiarity with the newest technologies as well as immersion in the Web 2.0 digital environment. (Helsper & Eynon, 2010.) The second generation of digital natives has grown up in an environment of total mobility, with mobile internet and Wi-Fi widely available and a range of mobile devices, such as phones and tablet computers, on hand. This second generation of digital natives was born in the world of mobile technology, and hence is a native speaker of mobile language. In this context, the first generation of digital natives can be considered to represent digital immigrants. For them it is, however, rather easy to adapt to this new environment of mobile technologies as they were the first to grew up in a wired technological environment. (Dingli & Seychell, 2015, 21.)

2.4 Contradictory arguments

Many academics have stressed out the intricacy and variety of young people’s usage of modern technologies which tends to be disregarded by the proponents of the digital native idea (Helsper & Eynon, 2010). Vodanovic et al. (2010) report, that even though the majority of academic literature draws a clear line between digital natives and digital immigrants, it would be worthwhile to conceptualize the concept of nativity in terms of digital technology, as a continuum. Depending on their experience with technology, some people can be considered more digitally native than others. Also Jones, Ramanau, Cross and Healing (2010) question the existence of the digital native-digital immigrant divide. In their study of first-year university students they found that there exist clear differences across individuals within the student population aged 25 years and under, which contests the homogeneity of the digital natives. The generation of today’s young people is not at all homogeneous and one way in which the individuals differ from each other is in terms of their experiences with the ICTs (Krause, 2007, 125).

Although research has indicated that young people are expert in using the modern technology and utilize it for collecting information as well as for communicational activities, there exists a remarkable amount of young people who live without an access to such technologies or who do not have the technological skills suggested by the supporters of the digital native concept. Therefore, making generalizations of the existence of a whole generation of
young people means only focusing on individuals with high technology skills. This leads to the danger of ignoring young people who do not have high interest in contemporary technologies or who lack the ability to utilize such technologies. Such generalizations may also lead to people overlooking the possible effects of socio-economic and cultural elements. There lies a possibility that within the digital native generation there exists as much variation with regard to technology as there exist between different generations. (Bennet et al., 2008)

It has also been claimed that young adults with a moderate education level possess less technological skills and are less adept at using the Internet than those with an academic degree. This suggests that being highly educated is directly connected to being more digitally literate. One’s educational background can also be seen to correlate with the type of web use. The higher the education one has, the more likely he is to utilize the Internet for activities that enhance his prosperity in the future. Instead, the tendency of people with a low education level to end up to capital-enhancing sites is clearly minor to that of highly educated ones’, possibly contributing to the strengthening of social inequalities. (Hargittai & Hinnant, 2008.)

Counter to what has been suggested by the supporters of the digital native idea generation solely cannot be considered as an adequate determiner for digital nativity (Helsper & Eynon, 2010). In their study Helsper and Eynon (2010), found out that regardless of the fact that young people are generally more adept at using technology than older people, generation did not appear as the only meaningful variable in explaining people’s behavior with technologies. Based on the results of the study, the degree of ownership of ICTs, the degree of using the Internet for information search and learning, multitasking, and being independently able to master the use of technologies were not solely determined by the generation in which one belongs to. Instead, factors such as gender, level of education, as well as the experience with and the extent to which one uses modern technologies are also relevant factors when it comes to assessing an individual’s digital nativity. Thus, a high amount of experience in digital technologies and a myriad of activities conducted via the Internet appear to be the most important variables in determining a person’s digital nativity in terms of interaction with technology. All in all, the study reported differences in generations’ engagement with the Internet, but at the same time indicated that there exist similarities across different generations. These similarities were mainly related to people’s experiences with technology.

The results of the study by Kennedy, Judd, Churchward, Gray and Krause (2008) also emphasize the diversity that takes place within the digital native generation. While there are individuals that utilize the contemporary technologies to a high extent, this cannot be seen to apply to all young people. Moving beyond the established technologies, such as the computer and mobile phone, the ability of youngsters to access the digital technology as well as their usage, vary to a large extent. These findings lead the authors to confront the theories of Prensky (2001) and other supporters of the digital native-digital
immigrant divide, and ultimately to question the existence of the whole digital divide. All in all, while there exist inaccuracies with regard to the digital native concept as not all young adults have the possibility to utilize the contemporary digital technologies to the same extent, it is certain that the youth currently make up one of the most technologically-savvy clusters in the world (Chyi, 2013).

The majority of literature that supports the digital native concept is based on research conducted in the United States (Helsper & Eynon, 2009). Such research has suggested that the youth are adept at using the contemporary technologies (Bennet et al., 2008), and given an assumption that all young adults can be considered digitally native (Kennedy et al., 2010). It has, however, been stated that the technology skills possessed by young adults are far from universal (Bennet et al., 2008) and in the world the majority of young people cannot be classified as digital natives. The extent to which the youth are networked alternates heavily and digital nativism is not homogenous around the world, but instead varies in line with geographical location and circumstances. It has been suggested that high-income countries, in which the Internet is usually used to a high extent, usually possess high proportion of digital natives. (International Telecommunication Union, 2013.) This has also been noted by Palfrey and Gasser (2008, 14), who state that in affluent countries in which the literacy rates are high and the Internet is accessed by the majority of the population, most children are digital natives. However, as a result of lack of access to technology and lack of electricity as well as low rates of literacy, a large part of the youth in the world’s developing countries cannot be considered as digital natives. Consequently, digital nativity can be seen as a culture specific concept.

When it comes to assessing the extent of digital nativity in Finland it can be assumed that the majority of youth are digital natives and the concept of digital nativity can well be applied in Finland. Of the overall population in Finland as much as 86 percent use the Internet and of people aged 16 to 24 almost 90 percent visit the Internet several times a day (Tilastokeskus, 2014). The findings of the study by the International Telecommunications Union (2013) confirm such an assumption as the study reveals that 98.3 percent of the total youth population in Finland can be considered digital natives and the Internet penetration among the youth in Finland is as high as 99 percent. Moreover, in 2014, 89 percent of Finnish households had a broadband access (Destatis, 2014), and broadband connectivity can be considered as the foundation of contemporary society (The Broadband Commission, 2014). As the young adults in Finland have grown up surrounded by the modern digital technologies (Kupiainen, Suominen & Nikunen, 2011) similar to the youth in the U.S it can be assumed that the concept of digital nativity and the literature based on it are well applicable in the Finnish context.
3 NEWS CONSUMPTION

As a result of the development of the Internet and the subsequent emergence of modern online media the newspaper industry has experienced a significant advancement (Qayyum, Williamson, Liu & Hider, 2010). Based on Palfrey & Gasser’s (2008) work, Lee and Delli Carpini (2010) describe the generation of digital natives as having grown up in an environment in which print news no longer dominate, the role of TV and radio as news channels is powerful yet declining, and the Internet is gaining more and more foothold as a means of delivering information. The concepts of digital natives and Millennials are terms that propose that young people’s habits of using the new media are significantly broader than the habits of earlier generations: people use various forms of media for different purposes (Kiliang, Hennings & Langner, 2012). The same pattern has also been noted by Castellón (2012), who suggests, that as newspapers no longer are the only information sources available, there exists information abundance. And consequently, as there nowadays are several different media available for people to obtain news information from, young adults tend to utilize a mixture of them in order to keep up to date on what is going on. Furthermore, a large amount of former print newspaper readers state that they have quit their subscription of a traditional newspaper as they have found similar content online (Purcell, Rainie, Mitchell, Rosenstiel & Olmstead, 2013). With regards to both information and entertainment content, the Internet currently acts as the first and foremost medium for today’s young people. At the moment, the media consumption of the youth is becoming increasingly linked to the modern information and communications technologies, such as the digital media (Szekely & Nagy, 2011).

The increased use of social media, including platforms such as blogs, Facebook and YouTube, has created a whole new way of consuming journalism. These applications provide users with the possibility of sharing media as well as creating content on their own. The role of social media can be considered significant as it enhances networking possibilities and has created new ways of knowledge transfer. (Kilian et al., 2012.) Through social media sites young adults are able to create own information streams which simultaneously enable them to gain an increased amount of control in the web environment (Qayyum et al., 2010).

Looking at the media behavior of the digital natives, a survey by Inmobi Insights (2013) found that mobile channels currently represent the most used media source among the youth. On average, digital natives spend 7.2 hours on different media every day. Out of this nearly two hours is spent on mobile media when making calls and sending text messages are counted out. All in all, of digital natives’ total daily media consumption, the role of digital media is significant, as the time they use in consuming media through digital technologies is over half of the total time used in media consumption. As these results reflect the media consumption of digital natives in the U.S., they need to
be treated accordingly although they may be used to predict the media consumption behavior of the same age group in other countries. Despite the significant role of digital media in digital natives’ news consumption activities, especially the role of television in youths’ media consumption is still important (InMobi Insights, 2013) although its role in the news consumption of the youth is stated to be declining steadily (Lee & Delli Carpini, 2010). Furthermore, in their study Kilian et al. (2012) found out that the dominant motive for reading newspapers among the youth is the need to be informed. According to them, other media are often used for entertainment purposes. The time spent with different media by the digital natives is shown in figure 1 below.

FIGURE 1 Digital natives’ media consumption on a typical day. (InMobi Insights, 2013).

Today’s young people live side by side of technology. Contemporary media, such as the ICTs and most significantly the Internet, have become so omnipresent in the daily lives of digital natives that the generation easily hops from one medium to another, at times also engaging with several media simultaneously. (Weiss, 2003.) We have come to the point where the issue of changing media consumption is prominent, and the habits of consuming different forms of media show remarkable variation between generations (Szekely & Nagy, 2011). As Peters (2012) points out, in order for journalism to be successful in the future, people working in the field need to form a proper understanding on what is consumers’ preferred place of media consumption, and through which media they consume the news.

The new ways of following the news by the youth have led to assumptions that the generation is not interested in news: if the digital generation does not fully commit to a news medium it must be that it is not into current affairs the same way previous generations have been. Research has, however, discredited such assumptions. Instead of not being interested in news it seems to be that the news medium and the style in which the information is presented, are the factors that are turning the digital natives away from
newsprint. (Crispin, 2011.) Also Palfrey and Gasser (2009, 6-7) state that the fact that digital natives may not purchase a newspaper is not indicative of the generation’s dislike towards news. Instead, digital natives now get their news in different ways and in varying formats.

3.1 Print media

Among digital natives, a major reason for the lack of consuming news in the print form is the perceived inconvenience of the medium. With inconvenience the youth refer to the efforts of physically obtaining the newspaper up to the point of its recycling, as well as the inability to multitask while reading it. Instead of reading print newspapers, information is obtained from online news sites as using them is easier and faster since such information sources can be used any time of the day, while simultaneously conducting other activities online. What is more, a factor explaining young people’s avoidance of reading print newspapers is the large amount of information such news sources contain, making it difficult to sort through the paper. What also decreases the readership of print newspapers among young adults is the fact that the youth may not able to get hold of the printed newspaper the time they want to receive news information. Also the colorless layout of print newspapers turns off the young adults – they want to see more colors and pictures. Young adults consider print newspapers as a slow way to keep informed as they need to glance through a lot of articles to find the stories that are of interest to them. Today, the youth want to be able to quickly find the information they need. (Zerba, 2011.)

A study by Huang (2009) came up with reasons why young adults choose not to read print newspapers. Firstly, young adults consider the traditional newspaper form to be dated. Newspapers are too long and contain a lot of information the generation of digital natives is not interested in reading. Furthermore, what decreases the attractiveness of newspapers in the eyes of the youth is the fact that the information in them may not be up-to-date as it has most likely been written a day prior to the newspaper’s publication. The multimedia presentations of online news sites seem more appealing compared to traditional news articles and the constant proximity of digital media means it is easy for young people to utilize it as a way of gathering information. All in all, young people are generally keener on other media formats and prefer to keep informed of what is going on with the help of the Internet and television.

When it comes to reading print newspapers the routines of parents pay an important role in determining children’s attitudes towards print newspapers. There exists a notable correlation between parents’ reading behavior and the extent to which the youth read print newspapers. Young people who see print newspapers being regularly read at home generally spend more time on such an activity themselves, too. (Raeymaeckers, 2002.) This kind of behavior is in line with the theory on a cohort’s formative years which describes the age at
which the cultural influences have the highest impact on a generation (Young & Hinesly, 2012).

A study by Geraci and Nagy (2004) found out that digital natives tend to use the traditional media, such as the newspaper, as a starting point for finding information: they may look for news on a newspaper but once they have found out the information of interest, they switch to online news media in order to deepen their knowledge.

### 3.2 Digital media

The current generation of young adults has grown up in the era of the World Wide Web (Costera Meijer, 2007), and today, the majority of young people choose to consume news through digital media, particularly through Internet news sites and social media (Freeman, 2013). As the digital natives represent the first generation that has grown up with the Internet and mobile technologies they are also the first ones to see practices such as tweeting, messaging, and engaging in social networks as normal ways of socializing (Inmobi Insights, 2013). Chan-Olmsted, Rim and Zerba (2012) refer to the results of prior empirical studies and suggest that the new media enjoy perceived competitive advantage as a result of better variety of content and higher quality possessed by the new media. Especially easiness of use, fast speed, and user-friendly search engines have been noted to be factors that appeal to young people in terms of information search in digital media (Coombes, 2009). Furthermore, Internet news are considered convenient as browsing news information online can be done simultaneously while conducting other activities on the Web (Qayyum et al., 2012).

Despite of perhaps not being interested in conventional news young people in general like to keep up-to-date on the latest news, and the Internet news sites provide a quick way to accomplish this. Online news sites are preferred by young adults as they are easy to check and offer the benefit of immediately finding out what has happened. Young people emphasize the efficiency of online news sites, and online news is also constantly updated and available all the time, adding to the benefits of the Internet as a news delivering medium. What is more, a factor highly appreciated by young adults is the fact that online news sites provide consumers the possibility of only reading the stories of interest and skipping the news the individual is not interested in. (Costera Meijer, 2007.) What also increases the attractiveness of the Internet news sites in the eyes of young adults is the interactive and filterable nature of online news. In addition, the Internet offers a possibility for obtaining more in-depth information on a certain subject, something print newspapers are not capable of, and is an excellent source of news for those who spend a lot of time with digital devices. (Huang, 2009.)

Online news sites have their disadvantages as well. A research by Qayyum, Williamson, Liu and Hider (2010), suggests, that online layouts are a
major reason why young people choose not to read newspapers in the digital form. Online newspapers are considered difficult to access to, and the reading of articles to require a lot of scrolling down and navigating through in order to find the points of interest.

Even though digital media nowadays generally play an important role in people’s news acquisition process (The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2012), the degree to which one supersedes the traditional media with new media technologies varies among people on the basis of individual characteristics, such as sociodemographic factors (Chan-Olmsted et al., 2012). It has, however, been suggested (Costera Meijer, 2007) that the future of news lies in the Internet which has the ability to combine each form of multimedia. It is likely that in the future young people will increasingly utilize the Internet in order to find topical news information that is of interest to them, as a result of the efficiency and the less time-consuming nature of the online media compared to the traditional news media.

3.2.1 Social media

Social media refers to a web-based product that is optimized exclusively by the people who use it (Cabral, 2011). The term entails online services which enable people to create and share various kinds of content (Bolton et al., 2013). The concept of social media can be seen to cover various channels, such as blogs, social networking sites, virtual social worlds, collaborative projects such as Wikipedia, content communities such as YouTube, as well as virtual game worlds (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Today, social networks, which represent the most important sector of the whole field of social media (Kaur, 2014), have become an extremely important part of the lives of the youth as such channels have come to represent much more than just a way of being connected to other people on one’s personal issues (Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research & American Press Institute, 2015). The generation of digital natives currently represents the largest part of social media users and in their lives social media oftentimes takes precedence over other activities. This is no wonder as the generation has grown up surrounded by the power of the Internet (Cabral, 2011). The importance of social media for today’s youth has also been noted by Vercic and Vercic (2013) in their study on university students’ use of social media and social media habits. The results of the study reveal that as much as 90 percent of students use social media various times a day. Clearly, the use of social media among young adults has been on the rise during the past years, as the study conducted by Jones and Ramanau in 2009 reported that back then somewhat over 80 percent of the digital native generation visited social media sites at least once a day.

Recently, social media has begun to play an important role as an information delivering medium and an entertainment channel (Kaur, 2014). When it comes to social media as a source of news, today’s youth tend to rely on the channel especially when looking for information on lifestyle topics, including news about culture, beauty, as well as local restaurants and
entertainment (Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research & American Press Institute, 2015). What is more, news information may be obtained from social channels without a distinctive search process at the same time when people visit social media to check what has happened in their social network of friends and family (Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research & American Press Institute, 2015). As a large part of the digital natives visits social media environments on a daily basis, such an information source can be considered to be of high priority to the digital generation. Even though traditional media may still play a meaningful role in the lives of the youth, it is the user-generated content, such as posts in social media, blogs, and pictures that shape the lives of the generation a lot more than other media sources. Moreover, such user-generated content is seen 30 percent more trustworthy than information obtained from other media sources, and also considered more memorable than information presented elsewhere in media. (Taylor, 2014.)

In their study on the use of social media among digital natives Williams et al. (2012) found out that the majority of digital natives prefer to read and comment on the content published by others on social networking sites leaving the creation of the content to other people. According to the results of the study, about 40 percent of digital native students regularly contribute to the content on such sites by publishing and uploading information. Also the results of the study by Ballano, Uribe and Munté-Ramos (2014) indicate that in the world of social networks the majority of young people see themselves as active participants rather than creators. When it comes to different social media channels utilized by the digital natives, Facebook stands out as the most often used source of information (Crittenden, Keo & McCarthy, 2012). What is more, a study on digital natives’ news consumption behavior reveals that social media from which young adults at least occasionally obtain news are Facebook, YouTube and Instagram. The respondents who admitted receiving news via Facebook responded this to happen on a daily basis, reflecting the ubiquity of Facebook as a news delivering medium for the digital natives in the context of social media. Even though the usage rate of Facebook is high among all individuals under the age of 35, the younger members of the digital generation are more likely to use several social networks for obtaining news information than older members. Furthermore, while the popularity of Twitter as a social network clearly falls below the popularity of Facebook, the network is in favor of the younger members of the digital native generation and nearly a half of digital natives with a Twitter account admit they regularly skim or read news stories posted on Twitter. (Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research & American Press Institute, 2015.) A study by Castellón (2012) on news consumption among young adults found out that social networks play an important role in young people’s news consumption. Quoting Parratt (2010) Castellón (2012) suggests that such a finding can be considered especially important as it indicates that young people’s information seeking increasingly happens in the online environment. Several previous studies (e.g. Branthwaite
& Patterson, 2011; Vercic & Vercic, 2013) have emphasized social media’s role as a way for self-expression and as a communicative tool utilized in order to interact with other people. The results of the study by Castellón (2012) however indicate that young adults use social media also to keep informed of the news.

Worth of noting is that although social media plays an important role in people’s news acquisition, it has not become the sole source of news information for consumers. Social media has not superseded other news sources, but instead it acts as a supplement for them. Moreover, although the importance of social media as a news delivering platform is increasing, there exist questions regarding the reliability of the content provided on social channels. Even the users of social media indicate some skepticism towards the channel and only 15 percent of people obtaining news via social media possess high levels of trust on the data provided there. (Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research & American Press Institute, 2015.) Although social media is, in general, heavily used by digital natives, there exist considerable variation in the degree in which individuals use such channels (Kilian, Hennings & Langner, 2012) as a person’s social media usage is affected by individual factors such as socio-economic status, lifecycle stage as well as personal values, environmental factors such as economic and cultural variables, as well as the person’s own goals and emotions (Bolton et al., 2013). Moreover, although the usage rate of social media among the youth is high, they do not use the medium primarily for reading news, apart from obtaining news in personal sense (Qayyum et al., 2013).

3.2.2 Mobile media

The consumption of digital news is increasing as more and more people obtain news information via mobile phones, tablets and other mobile devices (The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, 2012). Currently, the digital natives are without a doubt the most active users of contemporary mobile media and their use of mobile apps is increasing all the time. The generation can be seen to highly appreciate the possibility to conduct several activities via mobile applications and for them the mobile applications act as a key to interaction with companies. (Oracle Corporation, 2015.) Mobile news are said to offer the users the benefit of mobility (Chan-Olmsted et al., 2012). Combined with the ability of online newspapers to produce interactive, multimedia content (Chyi & Sylvie 2000), the mobile nature of mobile news is likely to lead to the increased adoption of such news sources (Chan-Olmsted et al., 2012). The role of mobile media is emphasized during the in-between times and it is suggested that mobile Internet is used especially while waiting for something, while travelling, watching TV, and shopping (Inmobi insights, 2013).

A study on young adults’ use of mobile news (Chan-Olmsted et al., 2012) suggests that ease of use and the perceived usefulness of mobile news are considerable predictors of mobile news use among young adults. What is more, cost, content and device related advantages are significant in predicting young
adults’ use of mobile media for the purpose of obtaining news information. In addition, the study found out that tech immediacy, the multiplicity advantage that reflects the advantage of providing multimedia content and affiliated links, tech customization, price, content, as well as the advantages provided by a specific device, are factors that explain young adults’ preference for mobile news platform over other news platforms, tech immediacy being the most important determinant. Today, smart phones and tablets act as fact-checkers and argument settlers for the conversations digital natives engage in. (Inmobi Insights, 2013.)

In terms of mobile news, the perceived utility plays an important role in determining young adults’ willingness to pay. It is worth noting, however, that although ease of use would result in early acceptance of the technology, it is unlikely that a transactional adoption will result if the perceived utility is lacking. Generally young adults with a preference for technology and sports news are the most likely to utilize the mobile media, and sports news rank as preeminent news topic for people consuming news via mobile technologies. (Chan-Olmsted et al., 2012.) The primary requirements of the digital native generation are convenience, easy access, as well as added-value and these will all have to be taken into account in order for a company to successfully conduct digital business. In doing this, placing a high value on mobile activities can be considered crucial. (Oracle Corporation, 2015.)

Nowadays it has become common for people to utilize mobile phones to access social media (Cabral, 2011), and a strong correlation can be seen to exist between the modern mobile technology and social media and a multitude of activities conducted in the digital environment. People with a smart phone have been noted to be clearly more prone to obtaining news through social channels than those without a smart phone. Furthermore, the tendency of smart phone owners to utilize search engines in order to find news information clearly exceeds the rate at which non-smart phone users use such applications with an objective of finding news information in mind. (The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, 2015.) All in all, over 40 percent of the digital native generation utilizes more their mobile phone than laptop computer to access the Internet (Marketing Charts, 2014).

According to a research conducted by Inmobi Insights (2013) the two main reasons why digital natives utilize mobile media as a primary means of accessing information are the convenience and immediacy of such media. Other reasons include the possibility to use the media privately, the ability of the mobile media to alleviate boredom, its cost-saving nature, and the fact that one does not own a computer. The reasons behind digital natives’ decision to use mobile devices as a means of acquiring information and their relative shares of the sample are presented in figure 2 below.
3.3 The effect of cost on the consumption of news

In addition to being updated many times a day and being easily accessible with just a working Internet connection, one more benefit of several online newspapers is that they currently offer a chance for consumers to read news for free (de Waal, Schönbach & Lauf, 2005). The chargeable nature of print newspapers decreases the attractiveness of print media in comparison to online media among consumers. The free access to online newspapers is a major reason why young people prefer reading news online to subscribing to a print newspaper, the subscription of which they consider expensive. (Huang, 2009.)

As one of the determinants of consumer switching behavior is the price of substitute products, the discrepancy in the prices of online and offline news sources can tempt people to switch to using online news sources (Ahlers, 2006).

Although the digital natives still have confidence in traditional newspapers as a means of fulfilling their information needs, different forms of media have started to replace the traditional forms, partly as a result of the limited amount of disposable income as well as time constraints of the digital native generation (Kilian et al., 2012). As several young people do not have high earnings they consider it important to be able to access news without having to pay for them (Huang, 2009). Furthermore, when it comes to cost, young adults tend to be sensitive, and often choose the alternative that is less expensive (Bennet & Maton, 2010).

According to a study on how and through which media young adults acquire news by the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research & American Press Institute (2015) it was found out that a large amount of the digital generation currently subscribes to some kind of online service but a clear minority pays for news information online. The results of the study indicate...
that young adults believe online news should not be charged for as accessing news should be a civic right. Furthermore, having got used to today’s overcrowded media marketplace, the majority of people see news information as a common commodity which can be obtained from a multitude of sources, and oftentimes without a cost (McDowell, 2011). Despite the decrease in the readership of traditional newspapers (Ahlers, 2006), the results of the study point out the fact that a larger amount of young adults have paid for a print news source than for its online counterpart (Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research & American Press Institute, 2015).

Recently, newspapers have started to deploy online paywalls on their Internet news sites. However, the paying intent for online news is low, as indicated by the study by Chyi and Lee (2013). According to the results of the study, as much as 60 percent of the respondents were reluctant to pay for online news while only 6 percent expressed they would be willing to do so. The results of the study by Castellón (2012) on young adults’ news consumption behavior indicate the same: nearly all young people turned out to be unwilling to pay for accessing information on the Internet, reflecting the fact that the possibility of reading news for free in the online environment sticks hard on the minds of today’s youth. The same study revealed that several young adults would switch to using other cost-free media sources if the news webpage they regularly visit started to charge for its content. Moreover, about 17 percent of the study respondents were ready to stop consuming news completely if there was no free news medium available in the online format. This kind of way of thinking can be considered to result from the emergence of a perception of news information as a public service, instead of seeing it as a product that can be charged for. Furthermore, consumers have got used to free downloads available on the Internet, and thus are disinclined to pay for online content (Rettie, 2002). In addition, although mobile news consumption has been on the rise recently (The Media Insight Project, 2014), people are generally not willing to pay for mobile news either (Chan-Olmsted et al., 2013).

Age can be seen to affect each and every facet of online news consumption. In addition to age, factors such as interest in news, a person’s gender, preferences, as well as the use of the Internet can be considered to have an impact on consumers’ paying intent for online news. Out of the five factors age and news interest can be seen as the strongest determinants of paying intent. (Chyi & Lee, 2013.) Chyi and Lee’s (2013) study indicates, that Internet news use and format preference do not act as very strong determinants of young adults’ paying intent for online news. This kind of finding can be considered to reflect the fact that use does not automatically depict paying intent, explaining the low level of subscriptions faced by online newspapers after taking into use online paywalls. Instead, it has been suggested that that the reason why people prefer online news sources over traditional newspapers lies in the convenience of the medium (Chyi & Chang, 2009, 119) but, despite preferring convenience such a factor may not be tempting enough a reason to pay for online news content. When it comes to print news, age is not a key factor in influencing the
use of such media, but it is both the person’s news interest and the preference towards the print format that matter (Chyi & Lee, 2013). It is suggested, that age has an impact on a person’s willingness to pay for online news, younger people being more likely to pay for news information on the Internet. When it comes to people’s paying intent for print newspapers, demographic factors, such as age, do not, however, influence paying intent. (Chyi, 2012.)

3.4 The effect of age on the consumption of news

The ICT consumption of the youth is substantially different from the ICT consumption of older people (Szekely & Nagy, 2011). The digital natives obtain the majority of news they consume from the Internet, followed by television, newspapers and finally the radio (Huang, 2009). As the generation has grown up surrounded by digital media, it has become more used to navigating through various online news sites than older generations (Lee & Delli Carpini, 2010).

The study by Purcell et al. (2010) suggests that Internet news users are younger than the adult population in general. The study indicates that people below 30 years of age, who represent the youngest online news users, tend to utilize portable news sites, and acquire news information from journalists, news organizations, and via social media. On the contrary, middle-aged online news users are more likely to visit local or national newspaper websites and are likely to do this on a daily basis (Purcell et al., 2010). When it comes to obtaining news information via social media, younger members of the digital generation are clearly more likely to engage in such behavior than those that are older, and this holds true for various social media platforms (The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research & American Press Institute, 2015). The Media Insight Project noted that the preferred way of obtaining news across all generations is to directly use the services of a news organization but the digital natives are more likely to show preference towards finding information via social media. The study also suggests that the probability of young adults acquiring news through social media is three times larger than that of people over 60 years of age. Furthermore, older adults tend to more often actively search for news information whilst the youth may accidentally find news while surfing the Internet (The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research & American Press Institute, 2015).

Even though there may not always exist a high variation in the topics of interest between the youth and older adults, the devices used to obtain the news and the way in which information is discovered, are factors that are affected by the person’s age. While older generations utilize TV, radio and print newspapers in order to keep up with the news, the youngest adults are likely to rely on mobile media when acquiring news information, and the youth are significantly more likely to utilize cell phone for reading news. Despite such
differences in the devices used, the traditional media is still used by the younger age cohort to some extent. (The Media Insight Project, 2014.)

Not all authors agree on the fact that age plays a major role with regards to a person’s news consumption habits. Consequently, the role of age in determining an individual’s news consumption behavior has been questioned. Chyi and Lee (2013) have suggested that format preference and news interest are the real predictors of consumers’ consumption of print news. Based on their study the authors state that although generally considered to have a significant effect on the consumption of print news, age and gender do not have a prominent role when it comes to determining a person’s interest in consuming news in the print form. Instead, it is the attitudinal factors that carry the most importance. What is more, there seems to be variation across the digital generation in terms of how news is consumed. The older the digital native, the more likely he is to read online news and to show interest towards news on the whole, and vice versa. (Freeman, 2013.)

3.5 Interests of digital natives

Digital natives generally consider news rather important, and their motivations for reading news range from civic reasons to social and practical reasons (Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research & American Press Institute, 2015). Today’s young adults consider it important to keep up-to-date on what is happening around them and aim at following the current events in order to be informed citizens. For them to be able to deal with what is going on around them, young adults see it important to keep informed and follow what kind of events are taking place in society. (Huang, 2009.) According to the study by Qayyum et al. (2010), young people’s interest in news topics is at least partly determined by the topic’s prospective effect on the lives of the young adults, as well as their expertise in the topic area. If news stories are considered relevant in terms of a young adult’s personal life, such as study or career related news, the individual is likely to show interest towards them. Similar finding also came up in Huang’s (2009) study as respondents indicated to be the most interested in news stories that somehow have an impact on their lives. Furthermore, a young adult’s deep knowledge on the subject area, such as knowledge on technology or science, is likely to contribute to his interest towards such news content while people lacking similar knowledge are usually not as interested in such news stories (Qayyum et al., 2010).

A study conducted by Huang (2009) indicates that young adults are the most interested in news regarding sports, entertainment, as well as worldwide and local happenings. The same pattern has been noticed by other authors as well: in investigating the news seeking behavior of the youth Qayyum et al. (2010) found out that local news were of interest to a large amount of the study participants. Furthermore, as Freeman (2013) writes, the majority of digital natives are interested in both entertainment news and news regarding people
and events in the local community. Moreover, in a study conducted by the American Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research & American Press Institute (2015) the digital generation turned out to be the most into in news regarding TV, music and films, also indicating the high interest in entertainment news by the young adults. While being interested in such content, digital natives show lack of interest toward economic news (Freeman, 2013). It has been suggested that young adults’ non-preference toward economic news results from the fact that such news content is not very relevant in the daily lives of the youth (Raeymaeckers, 2002) and local news are considered more essential by young people (Qayyum et al., 2010). Local news are also wanted in order to learn more about the community in which one lives in, to get involved, and to socialize (Zerba, 2011). Moreover, political news are not of interest to the digital generation, national politics, however, being considered slightly more interesting than international politics (Raeymaeckers, 2002). Consequently, it has been stated that newspapers should cover more content that is related to the lives of the young adults (Huang, 2009), as well as increasingly pay attention to providing the youth with news that are entertaining but at the same time informative (Freeman, 2013).

Based on her study on young people’s media experiences Costera Meijer (2007) suggests that young people are attracted by shocking, peculiar, extraordinary and funny events. Information related to such events can be considered to appeal to the youth as it gives them something to talk about as regular information seldom attracts people to start a conversation. Consequently, in order for information to draw the attention of the digital natives it ought to be somehow different, be it thrilling, crude, or fun. It is suggested that in the case of young people, the communicative function of news is considered more important than their informative function. Also Biladeau (2009) agrees on this by stating that the digital generation is most likely to take notice of information that is pleasant and fascinating, both in terms of content and the way in which the information is expressed.

Young adults tend to be rather impatient when reading news. When it comes to the preferences of young adults regarding the length of the news, they cannot be considered very interested in reading long stories, as they generally read long articles only once a week at most, and only if the topic of the article is of interest to them. As the length of the news story is of utmost importance for maintaining the interest of the youth in the news content, the articles as well as headlines ought to be short and go straight to the point. (Huang, 2009.) According to Purcell et al. (2010), young adults are generally more likely than other age groups to express they want more coverage in science news and discoveries. They also want more content regarding their own neighborhood and local affairs than older people.
3.6 Trends in digital natives’ news consumption

The majority of research concerning the news consumption of young adults has centered on traditional news media and indicates that the readership of print newspapers among the youth is declining (Freeman, 2013). Today, the use of media clearly varies among different consumer segments. New forms of media have emerged which have at least partly become substitutes for traditional media. Nowadays instead of listening to radio, many consumers choose to go to Twitter, while others turn to online news platforms instead of print newspapers. (Veinberg, 2014.) The digital generation is now able to access information on the go via mobile phone, through social media, as well as through an array of other digital mediums, along with traditional news media. The current trend regarding the news consumption of the youth is that the generation is not willing to spend a lot of time reading news, and neither has the patience for doing so. (Crispin, 2011.) Today, young people appreciate the fact that information is quickly and easily accessible (Castellón, 2012).

Huang (2009) suggests that concise online news articles together with the rich features available for use on the Internet are the key to attracting young people to reading online newspapers. He continues that young adults should be provided with multimedia news that are both customizable and of high quality, as well as relevant to the lives of the youth, and should offer the youth a chance to contribute to the content. At the same time, the results of the study by Qayyum et al. (2010) suggest that reading online news articles was preferred by digital natives over watching news clips on the Internet. This kind of behavior resulted from the time and bandwidth needed in order to watch a video and the fact that when reading an article one can easily scan through text and only read points of interest, while watching video news requires a lot more time as they need to be watched entirely.

When it comes to reading news stories on the Internet, it is common for the youth to just bump into such content instead of placing a lot of effort on actively searching for news. In the daily lives of the young people news reading can even be seen as an unconscious activity that is undertaken as a part of the online browsing routines of an individual. (Qayyum et al., 2010.) The authors hypothesize that for today’s youth news are no longer as connected conceptually to a certain media: obtaining information from a specific source is not crucial for the generation but instead, they use a mixture of different media in order to keep informed (Weiss, 2003). Young people today do not possess a clear news ritual similar to the one the older generations have with regards to their news consumption (Veinberg, 2014). As several young adults’ contact with the traditional print newspapers has been limited during their lives there exists no certainty regarding their loyalties towards a specific news source (Qayyum et al, 2010). However, the news media is not dead to digital natives. Instead, traditional news sources, such as the radio and television, just look different
now, and are available in the form of online media that can be accessed via contemporary digital devices. (Veinberg, 2014.)

The study by Huang (2009) focusing on the reasons behind young people’s low news consumption found out that over half of the respondents believed their interest in subscribing to a print newspaper would not grow in the future when they get older. Besides, the majority believed that in 10 years’ time they will primarily obtain news via the Internet with the help of various digital devices. Today, young people can be considered to increasingly dominate the Internet as they are able to create information streams of their own via social networking platforms. This may result in the digital generation having a special influence the development of news delivery. (Qayyum et al., 2010.)

3.7 Summary of the literature review

As the demand for print news is on the decline (e.g. Lee & Delli Carpini, 2010 and Cauwenberge, d’Haenens & Beentjes, 2010), and the news consumption of young people increasingly happens in the online environment (Huang, 2009), newspapers need to come up with new ways to attract the young readers (Johnson, 2014). The newspapers will need to be innovative in finding ways to provide the consumers with content that appeals to them (Graybeal, 2011) as well as come up with ways to provide the young adults with good enough reasons for adoption (Koegel, 2013). The newspaper industry is in need for coming up with an economic model for success in order to be able to compete with free-of-charge online news sites (Salwen, Garrison & Driscoll, 2004, 49).

In the following table some of the central theories and research findings related to young adults’ news consumption behavior are presented in order to illustrate the theoretical gap this research pursues to fill. Up-to-date research regarding young adults’ lack of reading news has mainly centered on why the youth avoid reading print newspapers (e.g. Zerba, 2011 & Huang, 2009), whilst the reasons for their non-use of online newspapers still remain somewhat unclear. Furthermore, consumers’ paying intent toward news has been examined from the viewpoint of all generations (e.g. Chyi & Lee, 2013; Lee & Delli Carpini, 2013). Such research has mainly focused on examining to what extent consumers are willing to pay for news content and what the factors that predict consumers’ paying intent for each format are. While these studies have suggested that age is the single most important factor in determining consumers’ willingness to pay for online news, they do not, however, indicate what kind of online newspaper would be the most ideal in such a way that consumers, especially the youth, would be willing to pay for accessing its content. Some strategies for making the youth eager to consume news have been suggested (e.g. Huang, 2009), but for the moment no comprehensive theoretical knowledge exists on what kind of news offering should be provided in the online context in order to tempt the youth to subscribe to an online
newspaper. Furthermore, although researchers (e.g. Veinberg, 2014; Castellón, 2012) have investigated young people’s news consumption behavior in the online context, such research has mainly focused on the news sources that are used by the youth.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author and Journal</th>
<th>Main Theories and Concepts</th>
<th>Research Problem</th>
<th>Methodology and Sample</th>
<th>Main Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young Adults’ Reasons Behind Avoidances of Daily Print Newspapers and Their Ideas for Change</td>
<td>Zerba, 2011. Journalism &amp; Mass Communication Quarterly 88 (3), 597-614.</td>
<td>Print newspapers; Non-use; Ideal print newspaper</td>
<td>What are the non-use reasons for not reading daily print newspapers? What would be the ideal print newspaper?</td>
<td>Focus groups with young adults, participants studied in two groups, 18-24 yrs. and 25-29 yrs. 64 participants in total.</td>
<td>Reasons for non-use: inconvenience, time consuming nature, irrelevant news, redundancy, effort required, media bias. Newspaper should be brief, have facts only, contain more local news, and more colors, be specialized, have wrap-up stories and diverse perspectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Causes of Youths Low News Consumption and Strategies for Making Youth Happy News Consumers</td>
<td>Huang, 2009. The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies 15 (1), 105-122.</td>
<td>New media; News consumption; Participatory journalism</td>
<td>How has news media failed to address youth’s news consumption goals? The best strategies in serving young news consumers?</td>
<td>In-depth interviews with 28 high school/university students</td>
<td>Reading newspapers is time-consuming, they contain trivial information, the delivery of news is dated, the format is less competitive. Newspapers should better utilize digital devices to broadcast news. Young people want relevancy and customizability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online News Consumption</td>
<td>Chyi &amp; Lee, 2013. Digital journalism 1 (2), 194-211.</td>
<td>News consumption; habits; future of news</td>
<td>What is the interplay between format preference, use, and intention to pay for online news?</td>
<td>Web based survey of 767 respondents</td>
<td>Age and news interest are the main predictors of paying intent. Paying intent for online news is low. News interest and format preference mainly determine the readership of online news. Print news use does not predict online news use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News Consumption Revisited</td>
<td>Lee &amp; Delli Carpini, 2010. 11th International Symposium on Online Journalism.</td>
<td>Online news; traditional media; young adults; The uses and gratifications theory</td>
<td>What are the primary news sources? Offline and online news media sources? What is the relative frequency of news media use? Specific online news media consumption?</td>
<td>Based on a secondary analysis of “Biennial Media Consumption Survey 2008” by Pew Research Center. Interviews with 3600 adults comprising of digital natives, digital immigrants and digital settlers.</td>
<td>Digital natives are the most likely to consume news on the Internet. Digital Settlers are more likely to visit newspaper websites than other generations but Natives have higher odds of visiting newspaper websites. Natives tend to visit TV news websites. The environment affects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| News Consumption Behavior of Young Adults in Malaysia | Freeman, 2013.  
International Journal of Social Science and Humanity 3 (2), 121-124. | News media consumption; Young people; The uses and gratifications theory | Are young adults interested in reading news? What are the types of news they are looking for? From which media do they get the most news from? | Quantitative survey of 500 college students aged 18-24 | Over 60% read online news regularly, older people read daily newspapers more often. Older youth consume more of all types of media. Entertainment and local news are considered interesting, news about the economy not. For the majority the Internet is the most used source for news. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mobile News Adoption among Young Adults: Examining the Roles of Perceptions, News Consumption, and Media Usage | Chan-Olmsted, Hyejoon & Rim, 2012.  
Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly 90 (1), 126-147 | Mobile news; news adoption; young adults; mobile phone | What are the predictors of mobile news usage among the youth? Is preference for a certain news topic related to the adoption of mobile news? | Survey among 384 undergraduate students in the U.S. | Content, utility and ease of use are associated with the adoption of mobile news. Utility affects young adults’ willingness to pay for mobile news. Tech immediacy was the main factor in explaining the preference for mobile news. Preference for sports and technology news predict mobile news use. |
Public Relations Review 41 (2), 299-301. | Media consumption; information; social networks; young people; news; digital convergence | How do digital natives seek out information in the media? How do they use the Internet if something unexpected happens? | Survey among 220 adolescents in two universities, aged 20-33. | Digital natives focus on media sources that are available on screen. All information and formats will have to be adapted to screen. Young people do not have a clear news ritual. If the information need is urgent, the first source is phone, second Twitter, and third online news sites. |
Comunicar 20 (39), 151-158. | Paying intent; Payment models; Price; Multiplatform newspapers | What are young people’s news consumption habits in the digital era? What are the attitudes and perceptions of young people towards journalistic information? | Quantitative survey of 549 people aged 16 to 33 | As people get older, their interest in the press increases. Social networks are the leading information outlets for the youth. They increasingly turn to mass media sites to access news instead of paid-for-newspapers and the cost-free press. Mobile strengthens its role in news consumption. Almost all young people are reluctant to pay for |
| Investigating the news seeking behavior of young adults | Qayyum, Williamson, Liu & Hider, 2010. Australian Academic & Research Libraries 41 (3), 178-191. | Choice of media, news of interest, news sources, social networking sites | What are young adults’ attitudes towards and perceptions of both print and digital news media? What news are of interest to young adults? What is the role of social networking sites in young adults’ news acquisition process? | Interview among 20 US university students aged between 18 and 25. | Local news of interest to the majority of participants. Young adults are interested in a combination of entertainment and hard news. The interest in a news topic influenced by past experiences and expertise in the area. The influence of parents has a major impact on young adults’ choice of news media. Print news were considered more trustworthy than online news. Some respondents occasionally obtained news via Facebook. | information on the Internet. They are interested in news and the low consumption results from dissatisfaction with the way information is presented. |
4 METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research approach as well as the methodology chosen for the study. The chapter continues by explaining the research phase and the methods used to collect and analyze empirical data.

4.1 Qualitative research method

The use of qualitative research as a research method is becoming more popular in various academic and professional areas. Qualitative research built up from the perspective of sociology and anthropology suggests that in order to comprehend to human affairs counting on quantitative research is not enough. Instead, absorption into subjective qualities that regulate behavior is essential. (Holliday, 2007, 7.) Whilst quantitative research deals with numerical data and utilizes statistical models in order to elaborate and interprets the data, qualitative research avoids using numbers and is all about explaining social realities (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000, 7). The data obtained through qualitative research are non-numeric and not as structured as the data acquired in quantitative research since the process of data gathering in qualitative research is generally more flexible, inductive, and less structured (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012, 6).

In qualitative research the focus is usually on a rather small amount of cases the analysis of which is aimed to be done as thoroughly as possible. Accordingly, in qualitative research, the scientific nature of the material is not determined by the quantity of the material, but instead its quality. (Eskola & Suoranta, 1999, 18.) Typical for qualitative research is the utilization of inductive analysis. As a qualitative researcher aims at revealing unexpected matters, the starting point for qualitative research is not the testing of theory and hypothesis, but instead a careful, multifaceted observation of the material. When using the qualitative research approach the purpose is to find and reveal facts instead of verifying already existing claims. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara, 2007, 159-160.)

This study follows the qualitative approach to conducting a research. The objective of the current study is to describe the way the digital native generation uses news media as well as to obtain in-depth information on what kind of roles news price and news content play in the generation’s news consumption behavior. As the advantage of qualitative research lies in the ability of the technique to concentrate on the functioning of social processes in detail (Griffin, 2004), qualitative research was seen to suit the study purposes. Furthermore, the choice of the qualitative research method is supported by the fact that the approach favors research methods in which the respondents’ viewpoints are emphasized (Hirsjärvi et al., 2007, 160).
4.2 Data collection

In qualitative research, an interview can be considered as one of the prime methods for data collection. Qualitative interviews represent an excellent way to get hold on individuals’ perceptions, constructions of real world as well as the significance they place on different variables. Interviews can be regarded as one of the most effective ways of understanding individual behavior. (Punch, 2005, 168.) The objective of a qualitative interview is to interpret the research topic from the point of view of the respondent, as well as to comprehend why the interviewees have come to possess this point of view (Cassell & Symon, 2004, 11). Qualitative interviewing aims at understanding the feelings, motivators and beliefs with regard to the personal conduct of individuals in certain social contexts (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000, 39). As a data collection method this study utilized semi-structured interviews, in which all respondents are presented the same questions. Moreover, in semi-structured interviews there are no ready-made response options but instead the respondents are able to answer the questions with own words (Eskola & Suoranta, 1999, 86).

As the purpose of the study was to investigate the news consumption habits of the digital native generation born after 1982 (Rickes, 2009), all the interviewees were selected from such an age group. To limit and focus the sample it was decided that all the respondents were to be students at Jyväskylä University. The aim was to interview both young adults that live in the city of Jyväskylä as well as youth residing in the close-by counties in order to form a more comprehensive understanding of the news consumption behavior of the youth in the area. Furthermore, the gender distribution of the respondents was planned to be approximately half female and half male.

Data collection was executed in the beginning of September 2015. The interviews were carried out at the university premises by approaching to students who were spending time at the university and were considered to belong to the target segment of the study, and asking them to take part in the interview. Moreover, when choosing the interviewees the aforementioned criteria regarding the respondents set prior to the data collection phase was kept in mind. Altogether 21 students were interviewed. Initially it was decided that approximately 20 people should be interviewed. When approaching the intended amount of interviews it was noticed that the data begun to saturate. To ensure this, one more interview was conducted which further convinced the researcher of the fact that enough data had been collected as the respondents’ answers strongly resembled each other. The criteria regarding the demographics of the respondents came through rather well, as nine respondents were male and 12 female. However, it turned out extremely difficult to find students currently residing in the sub-regions of the city to participate in the interview as the majority of students live in the city of Jyväskylä. Consequently, only people originally from the sub-regions of the city
of Jyväskylä were found to take part in the interview, and no interviews were conducted with people residing in the close-by areas.

The general information of the respondents is presented in table 3. The place from which the respondents originated from was asked in order to see if one’s hometown had an impact on the research results, such as on the respondents’ attitude toward regional newspaper. The table also shows the date in which the interview was conducted as well as the interview duration.

TABLE 3 General information of the respondents and the interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Place of residence</th>
<th>Hometown</th>
<th>Interview date</th>
<th>Interview duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Jyväskylä</td>
<td>Korpilahti</td>
<td>1.9.2015</td>
<td>6:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Jyväskylä</td>
<td>Jämsä</td>
<td>1.9.2015</td>
<td>11:47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>Jyväskylä</td>
<td>Espoo</td>
<td>1.9.2015</td>
<td>5:10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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As the interviewees did not know about the interview prior to its execution, it was considered important that the interview should not take more than 15 minutes of the respondent’s time. The time limit was stuck to as the average length of the interviews was approximately seven minutes. In order to tempt people to take part in the interview each respondent was rewarded with two coupons that enabled them to get free lunch at the university cafeteria. None of the people asked to participate in the interview declined.

The interview form was designed on the basis of the initial research questions. When constructing the interview questions, the questions were divided into categories in order to ease the respondents’ answering process and to make the interview run as smoothly as possible. The categories in which the questions were grouped in were 1) general news consumption, 2) digital news consumption, 3) price and payment options, 4) regional newspapers and local
news, and 5) the ideal online newspaper. The first two questions that focused on respondents' general news consumption enabled them to mention if they used traditional media sources or not, whilst the rest of the interview centered on media consumption in digital media which was on the focus of the study. All in all the interview was designed to map out the types of news the youth are interested in reading, and through which channels they consume the news media. Furthermore, the questions were developed to investigate the paying intent of the youth towards the digital news sources as well as find out what would be an ideal newspaper in the digital form in the eyes of the youth. In order to obtain more spontaneous answers the respondents were not told the interview questions prior to the interview. The interview form was tested prior to the actual data collection with two people from the target group in order to make sure the questions were understandable and fluently answerable. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed.

### 4.3 Analysis of the data

A thematic analysis is a recommended way of analyzing qualitative data when the research problem in question is practical by nature. The use the technique enables the researcher to obtain a collection of different answers or results to the research questions. (Eskola & Suoranta, 1999, 179-180.) From the collected data the researcher can underline specific themes to support the research questions. Such a technique enables the researcher to compare the occurrence of certain themes in the material obtained. In order to succeed, thematic analysis requires interplay between theory and empiricism. In a research paper such an interaction comes true in when the two intertwine with each other. (Eskola & Suoranta, 1999, 175-176.)

When it comes to this study, the purpose of the data analysis was to broaden the understanding of the way digital natives currently use different media, what the reasons behind their behavior are, and to which direction they wish the news media to transform in the future. When analyzing the data the aim was to identify the value-adding components for young adults when consuming news in digital media to be able to provide newspaper managers with managerial suggestions. In order to categorize the empirical data, theme-based categorizing was used. The interview themes served as the basis for finding the key themes in the analysis process.

The analysis process began by going through the transcribed interviews in order for the researcher to be able to obtain a comprehensive view of respondents’ current news consumption behavior as well as an understanding of the most important themes that come up in the data. The analysis then continued by a closer contemplation of the transcriptions to further interpret the data and some similarities and differences between respondents’ answers were recognized. As a result, the coherence and incoherence between the interviewees’ answers which came up while delving into the transcribed text
was also utilized to categorize the data. At this stage, prior empirical theory presented in the theoretical part of the study was utilized to support the study findings. The patterns occurring in the data were compared with the theoretical framework which functioned as a basis for the research results and conclusions. The findings under each theme were reported and demonstrated with quotations from the interviews. As the interviews were carried out in Finnish the quotations in the results chapter were translated into English. Furthermore, the findings of the study were used to modify the theoretical framework of the study.
5 RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the study. As stated in chapter four, the interview form was divided into six categories on the basis of the themes the interview questions represented. Consequently, this chapter follows the order of the interview form in presenting the results of the empirical research. All the respondents currently lived in Jyväskylä, and six of them came from the sub-regions of Jyväskylä. The average age of the respondents was 23.7.

In addition to the interview questions the respondents were asked a couple of supportive questions regarding their demographic background and ICT consumption. Out of the total of 21 interviewees, six admitted currently subscribing to a newspaper. Two of the respondents subscribed to a print newspaper, and one of the interviewees mentioned subscribing to both the digital and print version of Helsingin Sanomat. One respondent stated her parents had subscribed the newspaper for her. Moreover, one respondent read the newspaper of her hometown, and one had received a free trial of Helsingin Sanomat.

When asked whether they owned a tablet computer, nine of the total of 21 respondents mentioned owning a tablet while 12 informants admitted not being owners of such an appliance.
The next picture indicates the extent to which the respondents admitted conducting online shopping. In the picture, their online shopping behavior is divided into three categories, high, average, and low. The first category, high, indicates that the respondent was a heavy user of online shopping and conducted online shopping on a weekly basis, average meant that online shopping activities were executed on a monthly basis, and if the respondent considered his online shopping behavior low it meant he engaged in online shopping more seldom. All in all ten respondents characterized their online shopping behavior to be on a high level, three considered it average and eight stated they did not do a lot of online shopping.

When it comes to the respondents’ use of mobile applications, a clear majority admitted being heavy users of different mobile apps, indicating the importance of mobile technologies to digital natives. Altogether 17 interviewees mentioned utilizing mobile applications regularly, while only three stated they used them rather seldom, and one admitted every now and then utilizing the possibilities
brought by mobile media. Several respondents stated they did not use various different mobile applications, but the apps they used were used frequently.

FIGURE 6 The use of mobile applications

5.1 General news consumption

5.1.1 News consumption

The results of the study reveal that the majority of the youth follows news on a regular basis. The type of news followed by the young adults differed and was, for instance, influenced by the area of specialization of the respondent. A respondent at the school of business and economics mentioned keeping up with news regarding the economy and politics while a respondent studying environmental science expressed interest in science news. Other topics of interest that came up during the interviews were sports, culture, and entertainment. One respondent also mentioned closely following so called sad news and news regarding local community, whilst another expressed interest in everyday news.

According to the interviews, the Internet was the place where the respondents most often navigated to when looking for news information. The most frequently stated online news sources among the respondents were the websites of the daily tabloids, Iltalehti and Ilta-Sanomat. In addition to the daily tabloids, a preferred news medium among the respondents was the web edition of Helsingin Sanomat. Furthermore, also the online sites of YLE, Aamulehti and Keskisuomalainen were followed by some of the respondents.

The empirical data strongly suggest that television plays a rather large role in youths’ news consumption. Altogether about 33 percent of the respondents mentioned at least occasionally following news via television, some on a regular basis. Although the majority of the young adults interviewed expressed they did not switch on the television on purpose the time newscast was aired,
they liked to watch the newscast if the television happened to be on. Radio was not as popular a news source among the respondents as television but was used as a main news source among a couple of young adults interviewed.

The empirical study shows that youth increasingly utilized mobile media in their news consumption activities. Reading news via mobile devices was considered easy as a result of mobile apps provided by different news media.

“As I have the mobile apps of Ilta-lehti and Ilta-Sanomat downloaded on my phone, I regularly browse through their news as the apps make the browsing very easy.” (Respondent 5)

“I follow the news on the basis of my cell phone’s suggestions. I have downloaded apps on my phone and that is where I get the majority of news from. At the moment, the application of YLE is the one I use the most. The app provides me with news regarding Finland, the world and sports and these are the news I go through. I haven’t customized the app very much, I just look at the news the app suggests.” (Respondent 6)

The results indicate that local news is of interest to young adults, especially the news of one’s hometown. Several respondents who had moved to Jyväskylä area to study in the university mentioned reading the regional newspaper of their hometown, either via online news sites or the print form when visiting their hometown. Only a couple of respondents stated not following news regularly. The reasons varied from not having time for reading news to the perception of becoming distressed of the news content. This resulted from the news content being considered rather negative.

“I don’t follow news very much. I get grieved easily, and don’t want to follow news as they make me feel depressed and anxious.” (Respondent 15)

5.1.2 News sources

The study reveals that the reliability of the news source plays an important role in young adults’ choice of media. If something meaningful happens the youth prefer to search for information from sources that are considered trustworthy. For example, in such instances the web page of Helsingin Sanomat is preferred over the web pages of daily tabloids. Both Helsingin Sanomat and YLE were considered good general, nationwide news sources and were therefore used by the study participants. On the other hand, the online versions of daily tabloids were often used for entertainment purposes, as they contain more light news. One respondent mentioned regularly visiting such news sites in order to obtain information about celebrities. Furthermore, what is important is the independence of the medium. One respondent mentioned following the news provided by YLE because she considered the news of YLE relatively independent. The youth also like to follow news from a variety of sources in order to avoid getting a one-sided view of what is being communicated.

“I prefer to read news from various different sources so that I am able to get hold on different standpoints. On the Internet I follow news from a large amount of media as I get to read various kinds of articles and news from different fields.” (Respondent 18)
Also the ability to obtain news information without being charged for it was a major determinant of young adults’ choice of media. The youth visit the web pages of daily tabloids, Ilta-lehti and Ilta-Sanomat, as they are easy to use and one does not have to pay for accessing content on such sites.

“Inexpensiveness is one of the main criteria I use to choose news media I use. I don’t use sources for which I would need to pay for, although the payment would enable me to access the archives of the media.” (Respondent 4)

The importance of social media as a news delivering platform is visible from the study results. The respondents mentioned having liked the Facebook pages of some newspapers and consequently receiving their posts regarding news articles on their Facebook feed. One of the respondents stated she enjoyed spending time on Facebook, and consequently Facebook felt like a good medium to follow news from. The respondents also implied oftentimes coming across news articles that their friends had shared on social media, and as a result reading the articles themselves, too.

“When I browse through my Facebook feed, I often bump into news posts that my friends have shared or liked. Very often I click on the link and read the article myself, too. As a result of that I often go to skim other news articles on the site as well. For instance, if I end up to the web page of Aamulehti, I go through other news on the site.” (Respondent 2)

Easiness is a characteristic that was highly emphasized by the respondents when it comes to the criteria by which the respondents choose the news media they obtain information from. The respondents preferred to read news via mobile apps as such a mode enabled an easy and fast reading experience. Furthermore, Internet sources were preferred over traditional news media as reading news via phone or computer was considered easy, resulting from the fact that it can be done anytime.

The empirical data implies that the majority of young adults who mention obtaining news information from the radio, do not switch on the radio in order to listen to news. Instead, they use the medium to listen to music, and as radio channels broadcast news on regular intervals, they get to hear them as well. One respondent mentioned that as she almost always has the radio on, she regularly gets exposed to news. Another listed radio as his main source of news as the radio was on at his workplace. Generally speaking, news was listened to while simultaneously doing other activities, such as working or driving a car.

“I listen to news on radio if I happen to be driving somewhere and the radio is on. On such instances I am happy to listen to the news broadcast although I usually read news from YLE web page. I acknowledge, however, that the radio channels I listen to are rather commercial and the news there is presented in a very compact and fast manner.” (Respondent 6)

The results of the study also indicate that locality plays an important role in young adults’ choice of news media. According to the interviews the regional newspaper of Central Finland, Keskisuomalainen, was followed by some of the
respondents because they resided in Jyväskylä area. There were also respondents who had liked the Facebook page of their local newspaper in order to receive local news. Also the habits learned at childhood had an impact on the media sources the youth used to consume news. Although having moved to another city the youth enjoyed reading the regional newspaper of their hometown.

“I come from Oulu, and read the area’s regional newspaper. I have obtained the habit of reading the newspaper from my parents, as they subscribed to it when I was a child. It has become a habit for me to read the same newspaper. Nowadays I also try to read the regional newspaper of Jyväskylä as I now live here. I trust these sources – and of course regional newspapers are always trustworthy.” (Respondent 5)

All in all, the majority of the respondents expressed reading news on the digital environment, either on the Internet or via mobile apps provided by different news media. Only a couple of respondents stated regularly reading a traditional newspaper. According to one interviewee, he had subscribed to Kauppalehti as he received it for free during his studies. He mentioned reading the print form of Kauppalehti on a daily basis as he felt the newspaper contained interesting news related to the economy, which he considered important and topical with regards to his studies. Television and radio were used for acquiring news information by some respondents, but on such media news was mainly followed if the television or radio was on the time news was aired.

5.2 Digital media

5.2.1 Consumption of digital news

The empirical study shows that the most commonly used digital news sources among the youth were the daily tabloids and the web pages of Helsingin Sanomat and YLE. In addition, newspapers Aamulehti and Keskisuomalainen were followed by some of the interviewees. The respondents’ answers also reflected the prominence of social media as a news delivering medium. Furthermore, a couple of respondents mentioned regularly visiting the web page www.ampparit.com, which is a webpage that collects the most popular news from various different sources.

The majority of respondents were generally attracted by local and global news. News about significant global events was of interest to a large amount of study participants. Furthermore, the majority of the respondents preferred to read the top news in order to at least somehow keep up to date on what is going on around the world. A couple of respondents also expressed interest in economic news as well as scandalous news regarding the government and politics. Again the area of specialization may have had an impact on the respondents’ interest in such news content as both respondents were business students. Moreover, sports news was read by several study participants.
One of the respondents expressed frustration towards negative news content and stated that she usually read positive news. She admitted, however, that in spite of only wanting to follow news with a positive vibe, catastrophes happening around the world took her notice. Another respondent had paid attention to the fact that what is being informed is very seldom positive.

“I find news really often negative. Nowadays positive news is hard to find. Usually the news is about different disasters and catastrophes. If a plain has crashed, it will be on the news, but if it has landed safely nothing is mentioned about it. But of course news about such accidents interest people around the world.” (Respondent 16)

The study also reveals that entertainment news was of interest to the respondents and Ilta-lehti and Ilta-Sanomat were the main sources for entertainment news. However, in spite of interest in entertainment news, the respondents preferred to follow media that provides them with real news in addition to entertainment content. The data strongly suggest that the young adults place a high emphasis on the reliability of the source when choosing the medium they use for acquiring information: tabloids were generally seen less reliable and usually read for entertainment purposes only. The results indicate that the youth prefer to follow news sources they consider to be of high quality.

“I always think about the reliability of different media and compare different news sites with each other. I think Ilta-lehti and Ilta-Sanomat are a lot more reliable than, for example, Seiska. I don’t like to read newspapers that are filled with gossip. I choose newspapers that also provide me with facts.” (Respondent 5)

“I sometimes read the news of Ilta-lehti and Ilta-Sanomat but I only do that to pass time or entertain myself. I don’t expect such news sites to provide me with facts or very high quality news. If I bump into an interesting article on such news sites I usually go and try to find the same information from a source I consider more reliable.” (Respondent 6)

The results indicate that the most up to date information regarding topical events is usually searched from sources that are considered reliable, such as from the web pages of Helsingin Sanomat and YLE. What is more, news about worldwide events was generally being followed from such nationwide sources. All in all the news read by the respondents varied, and the categories of interest ranged from light to hard news. One respondent characterized her news consumption behavior in the online environment as follows:

“I read various types of news on the Internet. My news consumption is strongly determined by what news articles are posted on Facebook, and what news I just bump into. I read hard news but also a lot of news that entertain me.” (Respondent 10)

5.2.2 Decisions behind choice of specific online media and the frequency of using it

The study results indicate that mobile technologies have a strong influence on young adults’ choice of specific online media. According to the interviews,
young adults tend to choose to follow news from media the applications of which they have downloaded on their mobile phones. Furthermore, an advantage contributing to young adults’ choice of following news via mobile applications was the fact that such technologies were considered easy to use. Although the respondents mentioned following other media as well, the news sources the apps of which they had on their mobile devices were characterized as the primary news sources.

“The reason why I read Ilta-Sanomat is that I have downloaded its app on my mobile phone. I find it convenient to read news that way as I almost always carry my phone with me.” (Respondent 16)

Trustworthiness and popularity of the medium were factors that had an impact on several participants’ choice of news media. The youth believed that by following nationwide, reputable news sources they were able to obtain honest and trustworthy information regarding national and world news. The web pages of Helsingin Sanomat, Aamulehti, and YLE were mentioned as the top most reliable news sources to which the youth navigate to when searching for fact-based news information.

“The media I read are well-known and reputable, and I consider them trustworthy. I think those are the main reasons why I choose to follow such news sources.” (Respondent 13)

The empirical data suggest that also the level of writing affects young adults’ choice of news media. A couple of respondents rationalized their choice of following Helsingin Sanomat and YLE with the fact that such online news sites usually published articles that are of better quality than the news on daily tabloids. The type of news the respondent was looking for affected the choice of digital media used. If the respondent wanted to find news based on facts they used news sources that they considered reliable, such as Helsingin Sanomat and YLE. On the other hand, when wanting to read entertainment news the web pages of the tabloids were used. One respondent mentioned wanting to avoid sensational news and therefore preferred to read news from media that seldom published such news articles.

“If I’m looking for factual information or want to read about something serious that has happened, I always choose to read the news of Helsingin Sanomat or YLE as such news sites are more reliable than, for example, Ilta-lehti, and the news better written than those of daily tabloids. When it comes to entertainment news the medium used doesn’t matter so much.” (Respondent 19)

“In my opinion, Helsingin Sanomat and Aamulehti are reliable news sources and from such sources it is possible to read truthful news. I try to avoid sensational news and useless entertainment use and prefer to read news on sites at which I don’t bump into them.” (Respondent 9)

The data implies that some of the respondents attach a great importance to the cost free nature of media: being able to read news free of charge was a top
criterion for a couple of interviewees. The choice behind the online media being used was also determined by locality. Some respondents mentioned closely following the news of Keskisuomalainen or the regional newspaper of their hometown in order to be able to read as much local news as possible. Moreover, one respondent stated she preferred to follow media that are actively updated.

Furthermore, the results of the study indicate that the environment in which one grows up has a great impact on the media the person decides to consume in adulthood. Parents may act as role models and their news consumption behavior may be absorbed by their children. One of the interviewees felt that childhood experiences determined her choice of news media. She characterizes her choice of digital media as follows:

“I believe my news consumption behavior has been formed on the basis of what news media my parents have followed when I was a child. My parents have watched and listened to the news of YLE and already at an early age I got used to reading the print versions of Helsingin Sanomat and Keskisuomalainen. I have come to the conclusion that such news channels are relatively reliable and as a result switching to reading their online version has felt natural.” (Respondent 6)

The empirical study shows that the majority of youth follow digital media on a daily basis. Approximately 76% of the respondents mentioned visiting digital news sites every day, some even stated reading news several times a day. The study results also indicate that following news may become a habit which is then repeated daily.

“I follow digital media on a daily basis. I think following news has become a routine: every day when I wake up I browse through the news sites to see if something significant has happened.” (Respondent 5)

The study results indicate that young adults are heavy users of social media and such media are therefore also important communication channels for newspapers. The data suggests, that social media was considered as one reason why the youth come to read news as such media enables the youth to come across news without actively searching for information. Especially Facebook was attributed for the active news reading behavior by some of the respondents. As the youth had liked the Facebook pages of newspapers, they were likely to see some news posts every time they logged into Facebook.

“I read some news every day. I think it is thanks to Facebook, as people have shared news there. Or because I have liked the Facebook page of Aamulehti and therefore receive Aamulehti’s news on my Facebook feed.” (Respondent 2)

A small number of respondents stated following news only a couple of times per week. One reason behind such behavior was the perception of lack of time. Some people believed they would be informed if something really important they needed to be aware of would happen. However, the results suggest, that when it comes to people who state they do not regularly follow news media, the amount of time they dedicate to news consumption may vary from time to time.
5.2.3 News of interest

When asked what kinds of news draw their attention the respondents were relatively unanimous about the fact that shocking and somewhat tragic events almost always took their notice without exception. Sorrowful news regarding natural disasters and terrorism were mentioned as examples by the study respondents.

"Unfortunately it is the news regarding catastrophes that draw my attention. They make me think if something so horrible can really happen somewhere, as everything is rather well here in Finland. So I’d say that news about disasters that have happened somewhere in the world most often draw my attention." (Respondent 16)

The lack of positive news was also paid attention to by the respondents. The study results suggest that in addition to being interested in shocking news content, one more reason for why the youth read so much disastrous news is that news about positive issues are published much less frequently. The data also reveals that accidents were considered to happen relatively often, and therefore news about such tragedies was also read frequently.

"If I think about what kind of news I follow, I must say that I read very little positive news. I think that is mainly because there is no such news." (Respondent 4)

The data implies that even though young adults were interested in entertainment news, several of them disliked pieces of news that say “click and learn out more”. With such news the respondents referred, for instance, to pointless news regarding celebrities and actions they have taken. According to the results, the youth want to read news that is somehow informative and significant.

"I don’t think there is a certain type of news that draws my attention. The news article I read just has to be such that I am willing to know more about it. But then again, “click and learn out more” types of news don’t interest me at all. What I read has to be somehow informative." (Respondent 10)

"Nowadays many newspapers are filled with useless articles which I don’t even consider news. I don’t read such content." (Respondent 12)

Generally, the young adults interviewed expressed interest in news that was closely connected to their personal lives. Some of the respondents mentioned paying attention to news that was related to something they knew about or discussed issues that were considered important by the respondent. As the respondents were all university students they were extremely keen on news that concerned their studies or future work life.

"I often take notice of news that is somehow related to my field of studies as I consider such news important for myself." (Respondent 9)

The study results indicate that the heading of a news article plays a significant role when the youth choose which news to read. The interviews indicate that
young adults pay attention to the top news the headings of which are frequently capitalized. Furthermore, if the heading is well formulated and interesting, the chances of deciding to read the article increase. An article should be given a heading that increases the interest of the reader and makes him want to know more about the issue. One respondent also paid attention to the reliability of headings and criticized their deceptiveness:

“I always pay attention to concise news that has a good heading. I often bump into news articles that have been given a misleading title. I’d rather read news articles that are given truthful headings.” (Respondent 2)

According to the interviews, the respondents were also interested in articles that discuss topical events with regards to both Finland and the world, have an interesting picture, and are related to medical research. Besides, the study results suggest, that chats with friends and relatives may affect young adults’ decision of reading a news article, reflecting the importance of word of mouth in the news consumption of young adults. One respondent stated that if she had heard someone talk about something and later notices a news article regarding the issue, she might be interested in reading the article in order to obtain more information.

5.3 Price and payment options

5.3.1 Opinion about charging for online news

A common opinion among the interviewees was that online news should not be chargeable. Several respondents said they would stop consuming news if forced to pay for them. Charging for digital news was simply seen as a way for media companies to collect money. Charging for online news was criticized by many of the respondents as they strongly believed people should not have to pay for accessing information. Instead, the youth thought receiving information should be a civil right.

“I would assume that news should be a so called civil right, that people have a possibility to be informed of what is going on. At the moment, I am not very into the fact that we need to pay for accessing news on the Internet.” (Respondent 10)

“I think it’s stupid that we need to pay for information. In my opinion, people should be entitled to receiving information.” (Respondent 18)

What also came up during the interviews was that the respondents, who were all students, were not ready to pay for news content while still studying in university, or at least were not ready to commit to long subscription periods. According to the interviews money was a common concern for the youth and some respondents stated their strict financial situation did not at the moment enable them to subscribe to an online newspaper.
“I don’t like the fact that I should have to pay for reading news online. Of course, I understand that the media companies need to make money, but as a consumer and especially as a student I would like to get news for free.” (Respondent 4)

“I would like to read the digital version of Helsingin Sanomat but currently it is possible to read only a couple of articles for free, and then pops in a text suggesting me to buy their online newspaper. This is something I can’t do right now.” (Respondent 8)

Some respondents, however, took a somewhat different attitude towards the chargeable nature of online news. The respondents considered it understandable that one has to pay for reading news in the online environment, as one also has to pay for their print counterparts. In addition, one respondent stated that charging for online news is a good idea as long as the subscriptions do not cost a lot. Furthermore, although some respondents had a positive attitude towards paying for digital news, lack of time decreased their interest in subscribing to an online newspaper.

“I think it is completely logical and understandable that one has to pay for digital news although I don’t pay for news at the moment. In the future when I will have enough time for reading news I’d be happy to pay the price in order to support newspapers. But at the moment I feel like paying for an online newspaper would be a waste of money as I don’t have enough time to read it. That’s why I just look at the cover pages of online news sites so that I know approximately what is going on around the world.” (Respondent 6)

Despite the fact that charging for online news was understood by a proportion of the interviewees some of them still had a feeling that it should be everyone’s right to stay informed, making it difficult to determine whether it is right or wrong to charge for news. One respondent stated that the fact that one has to pay for reading online news has its pros and cons. However, he implied he did not read news when he could no longer receive them free of charge. All in all about 57 percent of the respondents had an absolute opinion that charging for online news is not fair. On the other hand, approximately 33 percent understood that news in the online context is chargeable, although they were not ready to subscribe to an online newspaper at the moment. Finally, about 10 percent did not have a proper opinion regarding the chargeable nature of online news and did not know whether charging for digital news is a good or a bad thing.

5.3.2 Online paywalls

The results indicate that the majority of study respondents were not very receptive when it comes to online paywalls. Several respondents stated that when they came across a paywall they simply quit reading the news or switched to another news site in order to receive more information. The data suggest that some of the youth do not see the paywalls affecting their news consumption very much, as they can always navigate to the free-of-charge news sites or just check the headlines. The study results also suggest, that the
existence of online paywalls is not completely acknowledged among the youth. According to the interviews, the respondents disliked online paywalls as they felt they bumped into them all of a sudden.

“I think online paywalls are horrible, because usually the paywall just suddenly appears on the page. I have just been reading an article without acknowledging the paywall is about to appear. I like to read the articles of Helsingin Sanomat but when the paywall pops out I just finish reading the news.” (Respondent 1)

“When I browsed through the Internet with my phone I every now and then decided to check on a certain media. Then, all of a sudden, when I found an interesting article I wanted to read, the paywall appeared on the screen. This really came as a surprise for me.” (Respondent 17)

The interviews indicate that a proportion of the youth takes a somewhat more positive attitude towards online paywalls. According to the respondents who were not completely against the setting up of online paywalls the news article would have to be very interesting and related to the issues the young adult cares about, in order to attract the youth to making a purchase. Moreover, price plays an important role in the purchase decision of the youth. If the price is considered rather inexpensive or the buyer is given a discount, and the news article seems interesting, the chances are the youth will make a purchase.

“I don’t think I would purchase an online newspaper if the article I wanted to read wasn’t really interesting. Of course, price is an important determinant in my purchase decisions. If an online newspaper would offer me with a good discount together with interesting news content, I don’t think I would immediately throw cold water on paying for news content.” (Respondent 2)

Also the fact that online newspapers are not completely chargeable and enable people to read a couple of articles for free was appreciated by some of the respondents. Although the youth had not paid for digital news they thought the few articles they were able to read for free, gave them a good overview of the newspaper, on the basis of which they might be attracted to subscribing to the newspaper.

“When I browsed through the Internet with my phone I every now and then decided to check on a certain media. Then, all of a sudden, when I found an interesting article I wanted to read, the paywall appeared on the screen. This really came as a surprise for me.” (Respondent 17)

The empirical data imply that although some of the respondents understood the use of online paywalls by media companies, they were still not willing to make a purchase after coming across an online paywall especially while still studying. However, one reason for not being willing to make a purchase was that such youth already had an access to the chargeable content of a certain newspaper.

“In order to be able to read the online version of the regional newspaper of my hometown, I use the log on credentials of my parents. As a student I haven’t paid for any news content myself.” (Respondent 5)
If I bump into an online paywall I won’t make a purchase. But then again, I already have subscribed to Helsingin Sanomat for which I have of course paid for. In any other media I haven’t paid for anything.” (Respondent 10)

The empirical data indicate that there are people who see online paywalls as an ineffective means of restricting consumers’ ability to read news content for free. Consequently, what was questioned by some of the study respondents was the effectiveness of online paywalls. A proportion of the respondents saw it really easy to skip the paywalls, and also utilized this opportunity in order to be able to read chargeable news content for free. One respondent also felt that online paywalls have been designed such a way that they are easy to dispense.

“I think paywalls are a nice try but I must say I think they have been left relatively easy to pass. I would assume that today’s IT nerds would be able to create such paywalls that really worked.” (Respondent 6)

5.3.3 Interest in paying for online newspaper

When asked what kind of online newspaper the young adults would be ready to pay for, the majority of study respondents indicated interest in subscribing to a newspaper from which they could obtain news regarding their field of specialization. The study results show, that the field of studies has an impact on the type of newspaper the young adult could imagine paying for.

“I might be ready to pay for a newspaper that focused on the field of my studies. I am studying early childhood education so perhaps I could subscribe to a newspaper that published news articles regarding the field.” (Respondent 8)

The empirical data strongly suggest that young adults could imagine subscribing to an online newspaper that published news articles the youth find interesting. According to the respondents, online newspapers with extremely interesting content or articles regarding their hobbies could increase the possibility of them making a subscription. Furthermore, the study results indicate that the ability to customize the news content shown on online news sites would increase young adults’ interest in paying for an online newspaper. Moreover, the results highlight the fact that young adults do not want to pay for information that does not interest them. Consequently, the ability to customize the content of an online newspaper according to one’s areas of interest appealed to the study respondents.

“I could imagine paying for an online newspaper if I was able to customize its content. I’m not willing to pay for news that doesn’t interest me at all, such as for scandalous news I consider unnecessary. I might be ready to pay for a newspaper in which I could only choose to read about things that interest me, and in which the monthly charge would be determined by the content I have chosen to consume. In addition, the newspaper would have to provide me with reasonable news so that I would be ready to make a subscription.” (Respondent 9)

The study results reveal that news content strongly affects young adults’ willingness to pay for an online newspaper. The results indicate that the
majority of respondents could not imagine paying for a newspaper that only published light news or the most basic news. Instead, the newspaper the respondents indicated they might be ready to pay for would have to provide them with factual, important information or publish thoughtful, profound news articles as the youth wanted to get value for their money. Furthermore, the empirical data suggests that news that contains scientifically proved results increased the interest of the youth in subscribing to an online newspaper. One respondent characterized the newspaper she would be ready to pay for as follows:

“As a sports enthusiast I could think of paying for a newspaper that published the newest, smartly written and scientifically proven news about sports issues. I would not be ready to pay, for instance, for articles that focus on ‘how to lose weight’ or that kind of things. I don’t mean I’d be ready to subscribe to a science newspaper, but a newspaper that focused on my interests and published smart news articles about such issues might interest me.” (Respondent 5)

The empirical data suggest however, that some of the youth appreciate the fact that in addition to hard news the newspapers also publish entertainment news. When asked what kind of an online newspaper the respondents would be ready to pay for, one of the respondents stated such a newspaper would have to publish both topical news as well as a small amount of light news. However, the results indicate that the youth place a high emphasis on the quality of the news source as the newspaper they could imagine paying for should not be represented by the yellow press.

“I could pay for an online newspaper which is not created by the yellow press but still combines both ‘real journalism’ as well as some light ‘news, such as entertainment issues.” (Respondent 26)

All in all, a couple of respondents stated they could not imagine such a newspaper they would be ready to pay for. According to them, there were enough free of charge newspapers available and the content provided by such newspapers satisfied their information needs. The results indicate that the respondents did not completely debunk the idea of paying for an online newspaper but for the moment they considered it unlikely that they would do so.

“There are enough free news sites on the Internet from which I can obtain the information I need, and therefore I am not at the moment ready to pay for reading news online. The web pages of YLE are completely free of charge and from the website of Helsingin Sanomat I am able to read five articles for free per week. That is enough at the moment." (Respondent 21)

5.3.4 Content versus price

The question regarding the importance of news price and news content divided the respondents into two groups. Despite the fact that some of the respondents indicated they were not ready to pay for an online newspaper at the moment, the majority of respondents considered news content more important than
news price. One factor that characterized such a choice was the criticality towards news sources: the study results indicate that several young adults appreciate the quality of the news source, and rather rely on news sources they consider to be of good quality.

“For me, news content is more important than news price. I am studying communication and therefore am very critical when it comes to the news sources I use. I prefer to read my news from a source I consider high quality, than read them from a daily tabloid.” (Respondent 15)

Some of the respondents found it really difficult to choose whether news price matters more than news content, or vice versa. Some of the interviewees expressed that generally speaking they were not ready to pay for digital news but might, however, be attracted to pay if the news provided seemed very interesting.

“I don’t read online news for which I need to pay for, but I read if the articles interest me a lot. Up to this point I haven’t come across a news article that was chargeable but extremely interesting. But I think I could be ready to pay for news if I found it truly interesting.” (Respondent 16)

“For me, content matters more. No, actually it is the price. Because if there is a free of charge newspaper available the odds are I will follow it. Of course content is also quite important, I am rather selective of what I read, especially if I have to pay for it.”

The empirical data suggest that in case of a chargeable newspaper, young adults are really strict about the quality of the content. Furthermore, the data indicates that the respondents were really selective when it comes to choosing how to spend their money, especially because many of the respondents had very limited budgets because they were students. As the youth at the same time appreciate high quality news the choice between news price and news content is not always crystal clear. The youth were not ready to invest high sums in news consumption but as the content of news mattered a lot to many of the respondents, some of the interviewees considered it possible to subscribe to a digital newspaper if the content was good and price low enough. According to one respondent, it is both content and price that matter:

“There has to be some kind of a relationship between the two... I need to get value for my money. So their synergy matters, I’d say.” (Respondent 20)

“That’s a difficult question because as a student I need to think about money all the time... I would say that if there was a very high quality online newspaper the news content of which was really good, not just gossip and stuff, I would be ready to pay for it. The newspaper has to provide me with content that is really good. Otherwise I am not ready to make a purchase.” (Respondent 5)

The respondents who considered news price more important than news content based their opinion on the fact that they are at the moment not ready to pay for news information. Although wanting to read high quality news some respondents could not imagine investing in chargeable news content and therefore price was a more important determinant for them. Among the
interviewees there was one person who said she could not contrast news price with news content and therefore could not say whether news price mattered more than news content, or vice versa.

5.3.5 Payment options

The study results show that if the price of an online newspaper was determined by the amount of news consumed by a person, many of the interviewees could imagine subscribing to a digital version of a newspaper. Such an alternative was considered good by the youth as the young adults stated that the amount of time they used for reading news varied. As they did not at times have a lot of time to read news, the respondents indicated they would be attracted by a chance of being able to pay according to consumption, since they did not want to pay for news they did not even have time to read. Furthermore, the results suggest that having come across an interesting news article the youth might be ready to pay for it if they did not have to subscribe to the whole content but just pay for the article of interest.

“I think my interest in subscribing to an online newspaper would increase if there was a chance to pay according to consumption. For example, if I read news on a certain news site only on two days a week, I would only pay for those two days and not for the whole week.” (Respondent 9)

The results indicate that young adults do not want to commit to long subscription periods. As their life situations may change rapidly the youth consider common one year subscription periods too long to commit to and instead prefer monthly payments. Furthermore, some of the respondents saw the prices of online newspapers rather high and considering their small budgets found monthly payments of newspapers difficult to grab to. As a consequence, such respondents were attracted by subscriptions that did not require long-term commitment. The interviews indicate that an ability to pay for one issue only, or pay a daily fee which enabled the person to read as much as he wanted during a certain day, would increase young adults’ interest in paying for digital news.

“I guess a monthly payment which I could stop whenever I wanted, could be a good option. A Netflix type of system. So if I for instance wanted to read news on January I would pay for January. Then again if I didn’t want to read news on February I would not have to pay anything. But if I wanted to continue my subscription it would be possible.” (Respondent 18)

The respondents’ answers regarding the payment options that would increase their interest in subscribing to an online newspaper reflect the increased use of mobile technologies. The study results indicate that an ability to pay for news via smart phone was regarded as a good payment option by the youth. The results also suggest that as quickness is highly valued by the youth young adults might consider paying for an online newspaper if the price could be added to their phone bill. One of the respondents also suggested a Spotify type of payment option, in which the predetermined sum would be automatically
debited from the subscriber’s bank account each month. These kinds of payment options were supported by the study respondents as they eliminated the responsibility of separately paying for news.

In addition to the aforementioned payment options some of the respondents mentioned that small enough prices increased their interest in making a purchase. Student discounts, which are already used by several newspapers, were suggested to be developed as they were currently not seen tempting enough. Furthermore, one respondent suggested newspapers to provide students with offers that, for instance, enabled them to receive the right to read a certain amount of articles at a low price.

5.4 Regional newspaper and local news

The importance of local news was relatively high for the majority of study respondents. A large part of the interviewees admitted being interested in local events and expressed following local news at regular intervals. Some of the respondents mentioned following the regional newspaper of Central-Finland as it gathered together the most important issues of the area they live in. In addition, a proportion of the respondents indicated interest in the regional newspaper of their hometown. The data suggest that of special interest to the study respondents was information regarding local events and that is what they expected to find in regional newspapers. The respondents also considered it important to know what is going on locally as several incidents happening on the local scale might somehow affect their lives. Furthermore, some respondents saw regional newspapers as a part of one’s identity and considered them to increase the sense of community among residents, therefore hoping the production of such newspapers to continue.

“I’m interested in what is going on nearby, and that’s why I like to read local news. I also think it’s very important to keep on track on what is happening in the surrounding areas.” (Respondent 2)

In general, the respondents saw regional newspapers as a good means of staying up to date on what is going on in their area of residence. Several respondents pointed out that oftentimes the regional newspaper was the only way to acquire information on local events as the large national newspapers seldom publish such content. One respondent criticized regional newspapers for being too biased but indicated being forced to follow them in order to keep up to date on what is going on in her municipality of residence.

“A regional newspaper is important as it enables me to know what is happening on the local level because a lot of things that happen here are disregarded by the national media.” (Respondent 4)
Among the respondents there were some people who expressed not paying very much attention to local news as they did not see such news very important for themselves. Some of the interviewees indicated being mainly interested in world news and therefore preferred to follow the nationwide news sources instead of regional newspapers. One respondent mentioned reading a regional newspaper if she came across one at the library or when visiting friends but did not actively navigate to the web pages of regional newspapers or purchase the print version.

“I read local news very little. Usually I pay attention to what is happening on a global scale. I guess it’s good that regional newspapers exist, but for me they don’t have a special meaning.” (Respondent 13)

The study results suggest that the regional newspaper of one’s hometown is considered relatively significant by the young adults. A part of the respondents stated they were more interested in following the regional newspaper of their hometown than the regional newspaper of Jyväskylä. One reason behind this was the fact that such respondents hailed from relatively small towns and were attracted to the area’s regional newspaper as it published information about people they knew. Moreover, a part of the respondents who had just moved to Jyväskylä stated they could better relate to the content provided by the newspaper of their hometown. Furthermore, the empirical data suggest that as the youth have got used to following the local newspaper of their hometown since early childhood, they have formed a strong relationship with such a newspaper and therefore are likely to keep following it in adulthood, too.

5.5 The ideal online newspaper

The last interview question sought to find out what the youth considered would be the best possible digital newspaper with regards to factors such as payment options and news content. The empirical data indicate that the youth expect convenience and easiness when it comes to reading news and paying for them. It is extremely important that the online webpage of a newspaper is constructed in a coherent and logical way and that all the information can be found easily. Furthermore, the interviews indicate that an easy to use and well-functioning online newspaper is what appeals to the youth.

Characteristics fastness and easiness were also emphasized when the respondents thought of the best possible way of paying for an online newspaper. The results indicate that some of the respondents who were interested in monthly subscriptions considered it really good if a media company directly debited their bank account each month they decided to use the service, instead of them having to pay a separate bill every month. Also the possibility to pay for news with one’s mobile phone came up during the interviews. Some of the respondents stated their dream newspaper would
provide them with a chance of paying for news via one’s cell phone. Such a method was preferred by the youth as they considered it as a fast and convenient way to make purchases. It was, however, pointed out that such a payment option should be designed such a way that paying was as effortless and fast as possible.

“It would be nice if I could somehow really easily pay for news with my cell phone. Paying with phone should, however, be made easy and fast.” (Respondent 9)

Furthermore, the study results indicate that the respondents would appreciate if they were offered several options with regards to the scope of news content, on the basis of which there would be different price groups. One respondent suggested that newspapers could charge for the most topical news whilst the older news articles could be read free of charge. In addition, the youth hoped the top news could be read for free while the more thoughtful and in-depth news articles could be chargeable.

According to the study results the respondents expected a good newspaper to offer student discounts or otherwise provide them with a student-friendly price. One respondent brought up the student discount of Keskisuomalainen, the regional newspaper of Central Finland. She felt that the price currently offered to students was a little too high and stated the online newspaper could be made more attractive by decreasing the student price even a little. What was also considered a disadvantage by some of the respondents was the fact that when living in the same apartment with a person who has a permanent job, a student is not entitled to the student discount. Such a restriction was criticized as not all young couples decide about their monetary issues together but instead make their purchase decisions individually.

“When I think about Keskisuomalainen, I think it’s really stupid that they have this rule that students living with a person that goes to work can’t get the student discount. I live together with my girlfriend who already has a full-time job but I can’t take advantage of the student discount although we both have our own money and take care of our monetary issues individually.” (Respondent 2)

The data suggest that the youth would appreciate the fact of being able to customize the content of the newspaper. When asked how they would describe the ideal online newspaper, a part of the respondents emphasized the importance of such an option. The interviews indicate that young adults want to read about issues they find interesting or somehow relate to their lives. Therefore the possibility of being offered a tailor-made newspaper constructed on the basis of one’s interests appealed to the respondents. As the respondents indicated not being willing to pay for news content they do not find interesting, they saw a customized newspaper as the best possible option. One respondent characterized the ideal online newspaper as follows:

“An online version of a newspaper that enabled me to create my own newspaper by making it possible to choose the things I want to read would be good. Based on this I would pay a certain price but so that I did not have to subscribe to the whole content, which I may not find interesting. So that I could choose to only receive news from
certain categories, such as sports and the economy, and also choose whether I want to receive the most topical news or news from past week, and pay accordingly. That would be convenient.” (Respondent 5)

At the moment some of the respondents saw the content of Keskisuomalainen, the regional paper of Jyväskylä, rather constricted. In order to see it as the only sufficient news source the youth wished the newspaper to provide them with a wider subject cavalcade. The respondents felt that at the moment the focus of the newspaper was too much on local news and the newspaper did not publish enough content related to other subject areas. Consequently, the study respondents requested a good combination of local and national news. Furthermore, the empirical data suggest that in addition to local and national news the youth would expect a regional newspaper to publish more thoughtful and profound texts, for instance in the form of weekend supplements.

“The content of an optimal digital newspaper... Well, in addition to regional news I’d like to read something that is more in-depth. For a long time I have subscribed to Savon Sanomat and they have this Sunday supplement Sunnuntaisumalainen. It has contained interesting, more thorough texts which I have enjoyed reading.” (Respondent 10)

When the respondents thought of the content of the best possible online newspaper they could imagine, they mentioned expecting the news offering to be broad, and the webpage to enable them to find out news information from various different fields and subject areas. Some of the respondents stated the best possible online newspaper would offer them both factual information and light news. The young adults saw encompassing news content as a huge advantage for a newspaper.

“A good digital newspaper has a broad content and publishes information about various different subjects so that there is something for everyone and a lot to read about.” (Respondent 11)

The study results indicate that young adults object biased texts. According to the interviews the youth wish the news articles to provide them with various viewpoints. What they contest is the fact that a newspaper has a certain standpoint according to which the reporters need to construct their texts. Some respondents also paid attention to the layout of online newspapers. The results suggest that the youth would like the most read news to be displayed on the main page. In addition, the young adults hoped that based on the news articles they have read the webpage would suggest them similar news the youth might be interested in reading. A good online newspaper was seen to contain the same information as its print counterpart but also offer online extras, such as news videos.

Among the respondents two people stated they did not want to answer the question as they were not ready to pay for any kind of newspaper. Moreover, one respondent refused to answer the question as he did not follow regional newspapers. Lastly, one of the respondents thought the current online newspapers were good. She stated that as a student she was not able to
subscribe to any kind of newspaper but could imagine paying for an online newspaper in the future after she had found a job.

All in all, there were not any major differences in the way women and men consume news. The results showed that both men and women were generally as interested in news and no major variations in the sources for news or attitude towards paying for news between the genders could be reported. Furthermore, the news topics the respondents were interested in was not determined by gender.
6 DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the news consumption behavior of today’s young adults, the generation oftentimes referred to as the digital natives. On the focus of the study was digital natives’ news consumption in digital media. As media companies are struggling with losing young audiences the study aimed at finding out how young adults could be attracted to subscribing to news in the digital environment. The study also aimed at providing answers on how the youth currently consume news and what kind of role news price and news content play in digital natives’ news consumption decisions. The main purpose of the study was to reveal the factors that determine young adults’ consumption of news and based on them find out what kind of a digital newspaper should be provided in order to attract the youth to making a subscription.

The results of the empirical study confirm many of the findings of previous research, such as the importance of the Internet as a news medium to digital natives as well as the generation’s preference for fastness and easiness of use when acquiring news information. The study also revealed interesting points concerning how the youth would characterize the ideal digital newspaper in terms of payment options, content and layout. Such findings can be considered important as they may assist media companies in developing their digital newspapers in order to better meet the needs of young people.

In the following sections the results of the research will be discussed in the light of the existing theory on digital natives and their news consumption habits. Next, on the basis of the discussion the managerial implications are presented. After that the reliability and validity of research results are evaluated. Finally, the chapter ends with a presentation of the limitations of the study as well as suggestions for further research.

6.1 Theoretical contributions

6.1.1 How digital natives consume the news

This study showed that for the digital natives the online environment acts as the most important source for news. Among the study respondents a clear minority mentioned regularly obtaining news from traditional newspapers. Instead, the online news sites of different media companies received high popularity among the study respondents and different online media were followed by the majority of the respondents on a daily basis. Such a prominence with regards to the Internet in the lives of the youth is also supported by Szekely and Nagy (2011) who suggest that the media consumption among the youth nowadays increasingly takes place in the digital environment. The
current study showed that the electronic media has not, however, completely superseded the traditional news sources. According to Chan-Olmsted et al. (2012) the extent to which the youth replace traditional news sources with digital media is dependent on individual characteristics. This study can be seen to confirm the findings of Chan-Olmstead et al. (2012) as among the respondents there were people who mentioned following news via television and radio as well. Although television is losing its share in young adults’ news consumption activities (Lee & Delli Carpini, 2010), the study results indicate that at least for now television is still considered as an important source of news by the digital natives since over 30 percent of study respondents expressed regularly following news via television.

Characteristic for obtaining information from television and radio was, however, the fact that the youth did not switch on such appliances in order to listen to news. Instead, they indicated following news via such channels if the television or radio happened to be on while the newscast was aired. Furthermore, the current study showed that the youth oftentimes obtain news information from several different media. This is in line with the findings of the study by Castellón (2012) which suggests that as information nowadays is attainable from various different media, the youth prefer to use a mixture of them. Accordingly, the results of the current study showed that the young adults used both online and offline news sources in order to keep informed and in the online environment preferred to utilize several sources and based on the type of information they were looking for choose the source they considered the most appropriate.

According to prior theory, young adults nowadays increasingly utilize social media to obtain news information (Castellón, 2012). The results of this study confirm the increased role of social media as a way of acquiring news information. Many respondents mentioned having liked the Facebook pages of newspapers and consequently received news posted by the newspaper on their personal feed. The respondents also stated that in social media they often came across news that was shared by their friends. The findings of this study showed that social media has become a significant source for news information for the youth and on the basis of the results the importance of social media as a means of coming across news articles was clear. According to Crittenden, Keo & McCarthy (2012), of the various social media channels Facebook is the most used source among the digital native generation. The current study confirmed the findings as Facebook was mentioned as an important source for news by a large part of the study respondents. However, on the contrary to previous findings which suggest that in addition to Facebook young adults receive news via YouTube, Twitter and Instagram as well (Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research & American Press Institute, 2015), the respondents of this study only mentioned Facebook as social media they received news information from. This can be seen to indicate that the youth may not yet be familiar with other social media channels as platforms from which to obtain
news information from, or at least their role in delivering news currently is relatively small.

The current study also found that characteristic for the news consumption of young adults is that they do not always actively search for news but acquire such information accidentally. According to the study by Qayyum et al. (2010), people often obtain news information without actively searching for it while they conduct other activities on the Internet. The current study confirms such findings, as it indicates that young adults, by chance, oftentimes come across news articles while surfing the Internet. The current research further deepens the previous findings of coming across information without an active search process, as the empirical results indicate that that such a way of bumping into news is commonplace especially in the context of social media as in social media the youth regularly come across news articles that have been shared by their friends.

6.1.2 Factors determining digital natives’ news consumption

The current study supports the earlier studies as it indicated that young adults appreciate fast speed and easiness of use in their news consumption activities. According to Zerba (2011), for the digital natives it is extremely important that they find the needed information as quickly as possible. Also, as Coombes (2009) noted, the possibility to fast and easily use a medium is of importance to young adults. This study confirmed the findings by Coombes (2009) and Zerba (2011), as the results showed that when choosing the medium from which to obtain news, the youth prefer to choose media that can be accessed fast and used relatively effortlessly. The request for easiness and fastness was also visible when the youth thought of the ideal newspaper in terms of payment options. The empirical findings indicated that the digital natives want paying for news to be made as easy and effortless as possible and see such a method as a means of increasing their interest in subscribing to a digital newspaper.

The results of this study pointed out, that mobile media nowadays play a significant role in young adults’ news consumption. According to the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press (2012) an increasing amount of people utilizes the mobile media in order to access news. The current study confirmed that an increase in young adults’ interest in reading news via mobile is exactly due to the easiness of use of such media, a finding supported by Chan-Olmsted et al. (2012), who state that easiness of use is a strong predictor of mobile news use among the digital natives. According to Zerba (2011), consuming mobile news does not tie a person to a specific time or location but instead mobile news can be accessed regardless of physical location or time of day. The results of this study confirm the findings by Zerba (2011), as they showed that young adults are attracted to reading news via smart phone as it enables them to acquire news information anytime and does not tie them to a specific location. The study results also confirmed the findings of the study by Inmobi Insights (2013) which suggest that tech immediacy is an important factor leading the youth to utilize mobile technologies in order to access news.
The study results show that reading news via mobile was considered convenient by the youth as people almost always carry their phone with them. This is in line with the findings by Huang (2009), according to whom it is convenient for young people to utilize digital media to gather information as a result of the constant proximity of digital media.

The current study increased knowledge on young adults’ preferences for payment options as it revealed that digital natives’ are interested in utilizing the mobile technologies when paying for news. The respondents of the current study indicated interest in paying for news via mobile as they considered it an easy way to pay for news. In addition, the study results indicated young adults’ preference for Spotify-type of direct debit, as it eliminates the responsibility of having to pay a separate bill when making a subscription. Such findings can be seen important as they can be considered to indicate young adults’ displeasure toward the current payment processes when subscribing to a newspaper.

The current study found that childhood experiences play an important role in shaping young adults’ news consumption behavior. Such a finding is in line with the theory on a cohort’s formative years that is used to describe the age at which a person is most highly affected by the surrounding cultural influences (Young & Hinesly, 2012). The empirical findings revealed that the news consumption habits of parents often determine the way the youth consume media in adulthood and especially the sources they use to obtain news information. The study results showed that some of the respondents had absorbed the news consumption habits of their parents and in adulthood continued to use the same news sources they had got used to consuming in childhood.

The current study contributes to the existing knowledge on the news consumption behavior of digital natives by suggesting that today’s young adults appreciate news media they consider trustworthy and reliable. The empirical findings reveal that the perceived trustworthiness and popularity of a news medium are important factors determining young adults’ choice of news media. The results indicate the youth react to news sources with criticism, as well as suggest that quality of news is of high importance to the digital generation. Media that offers honest and fact-based information are preferred over news sources filled with gossip.

### 6.1.3 The role of news price in digital natives’ news consumption

The current study found that the possibility to obtain news information without a charge plays an important role in young adults’ choice of news media. The study results indicate that for a large part of the respondents the cost-free nature of a medium was a major criterion when choosing between various news sources and the most frequently visited online news pages among the respondents were the cost-free sites of the daily tabloids. Such a finding is reasonable considering the earlier studies on young adults’ news consumption and confirms the findings of Huang (2009), which suggest that several young adults appreciate free access to news articles. Huang (2009) continues that such
behavior is a result of the low level of earnings possessed by young adults. Such a finding is supported by the current study in which all the respondents were students, of which the majority stated they were not ready to pay for news while still studying. In addition to confirming such findings of previous studies the current study revealed important insights on the attitude of the digital natives on the subscription periods of newspapers. The results of the current study indicated that as a result of being students many of the respondents did not want to commit to long subscription periods. The youth explained this by their small budgets and the fact that they saw their lives exposed to change. As a result, digital natives indicated interest in shorter subscriptions instead of having to make a long-term commitment.

The empirical findings also showed that a clear minority of the youth pay or have paid for accessing news in digital media. Among the respondents there prevailed a perception that news information should be a civil right and therefore not chargeable. Many of the respondents thought people should not have to pay for receiving information. Such a finding is supported by Castellón (2015) who found that the youth see the news as a public service which thus should be given free access to.

According to Chyi and Lee (2013), age and interest in news are the strongest factors depicting paying intent for online news. The current study confirms the findings by Chyi and Lee (2013), as it showed that the younger respondents were generally more reluctant to pay for online news and indicated they could not imagine paying for such news, whilst older interviewees stated they could think of paying for online news if the content and payment options were attracting enough. Therefore it can be suggested that as the digital natives grow older, their attitudes towards paying for online news become less imperative and they may show green light to subscribing to a digital newspaper. The study also supported Chyi and Lee’s (2013) finding regarding the role of news interest in determining willingness to pay for online news. The results of the current study showed that digital natives are more willing to pay for news content they find interesting. According to study respondents, the ability to read news regarding their past time hobbies or field of specialization would increase their willingness to pay for online news.

6.1.4 The role of news content in digital natives’ news consumption

The empirical findings revealed that young adults’ interest in a news topic is strongly determined by the topic’s effect on the lives of the youth. This is supported by Qayyum et al. (2010), who suggest that a news topic’s connectedness with a young adult’s life is likely to contribute to his interest in the topic. If a news article is considered relevant with regards to a young adult’s personal life, such as career or study related news, the odds are the young adult will be interested in obtaining more information about the issue. In this study it was found out that the respondents indicated a high level of interest in news that was somehow linked with their studies or area of specialization. The results showed that respondents studying in the school of education were
interested in news regarding their field of studies, whilst respondents majoring in business indicated interest in news regarding the economy. On the other hand, the study showed that news in which the youth cannot relate to are not considered interesting by them. This is supported by the study by Qayyum et al. (2010) which suggests that profound knowledge on a specific area is likely to lead a person being interested in information regarding the subject, while people lacking such knowledge typically are not as keen on such information. This can be seen to explain young adults’ dislike for economic news as suggested by the current study, since the youth do not consider such news relevant with regards to their daily lives (Raeymaeckers, 2002).

The current study supports the earlier studies in that the digital natives are interested in local news and events that take place in their neighborhood. Such a finding is in line with prior theory which points out that the youth see it important to be informed citizens and therefore want to follow current events (Huang, 2009). Digital natives consider local news relevant for their lives (Qayyum et al., 2010) and, as the results suggest, are interested in reading them as they want to acquire more information on the community in which they reside in. The study confirms such theories as the results indicate that the respondents wanted to follow local news in order to find out what is currently happening in their place of residence or hometown.

This study confirmed the findings of previous studies in that the youth are interested in entertainment news (Huang, 2009; Qayyum et al., 2010; Freeman, 2013). However, as the study results show, the reason why young adults wanted to read such light news was that they wanted to get entertained. At the same time the respondents also emphasized that they wanted to read fact-based hard news. Therefore the results can be seen to support the findings of Freeman (2013), who suggests that young people should be offered news that is both entertaining and informative. The current study also produced important information on the types of news digital natives can be considered to dislike. The empirical findings revealed that even though they ask for some light news to balance the news offering, young adults prefer not to read news the headings of which suggest them to click and learn out more. The finding can be considered important as such news headings have become rather commonplace in digital media. Furthermore, the current study can be considered to contribute to the existing literature on digital natives’ news consumption behavior by revealing that the youth expect newspapers to provide them with a wide selection of news. In addition to the aforementioned news content digital natives request for a combination of local and national news as well as some thoughtful, profound texts from which to obtain deeper information from. Such a finding can be considered important as it assists the media companies in designing their newspaper to better meet the desires of young people.

The results of the current study also point out that digital natives are interested in reading about different kind of catastrophes, disasters, and accidents that have taken place. This is in line with previous research which suggests, that shocking, unusual and extraordinary events appeal to and are of
interest to the digital generation (Costera-Meijer, 2007). The study found that a large amount of respondents paid attention to such news articles and was interested in acquiring more information about tragic events, reflecting the digital natives’ interest in such news content.

According to Huang (2009) newspapers should provide young adults with content, that can be customized and give the digital natives a possibility to contribute to the content. Such a finding is reasonable as also the current study indicated young adults’ strong interest in customizing the content of a newspaper based on the areas they are interested in. The results of this study showed that the youth do not want to read news they consider irrelevant for their lives. Instead, the results point out that young adults are interested in news that is somehow connected to their personal life, such as their field of studies. Furthermore, the study found that if offered a chance to customize the content of a newspaper, and thus avoid content they do not find interesting, young adults’ willingness to pay for online news would increase. Such a finding can be seen important considering the fact that newspapers need to find new ways to attract young readers to subscribing to their newspapers.

One of the most important findings of the current study was that a large part of the respondents wanted news price to be determined on the basis of the amount of news consumed. The study found that the amount of news consumed by the digital natives varied from time to time and consequently a possibility to only pay for what had been consumed attracted the youth. This can be considered as an important finding as it is something prior studies have not highlighted. The results of the current study indicated that young adults do not want to pay for news they do not even read, reflecting that the generation is only willing to pay for something that appeals to it or it can take advantage of. According to Costera-Meijer (2007), young adults do not want to read news they do not find interesting. Consequently it seems rational that the youth are not willing to pay for such news content, either. As a result, the findings of the current study, which suggest that young adults would be attracted by newspapers that offered them various options regarding the scope of news, on the basis of which there would be different price groups, seems important.

To conclude, this study contributes to the existing knowledge regarding the news consumption behavior of the digital natives. The study confirms the existing theories about the media consumption of the digital generation in that the news consumption of young adults increasingly takes place on the Internet and with the help of mobile technologies. Furthermore, this study can be seen to confirm the previous findings regarding the increased importance of social media in delivering news information to the youth, as well as young adults’ preference for fast speed and easiness of use when consuming news. In addition, the study revealed interesting points about how digital natives characterize an optimal online newspaper, what factors they would appreciate in a newspaper, and what currently irritates the youth in online newspapers. The study found, for instance, that the quality of news content is of importance for young adults and that news they can imagine paying for has to be fact-based and informative.
Furthermore, the study came up with digital natives’ preference for avoiding long subscription periods and interest in paying for news on the basis of consumption. The study confronts the assumptions of some researchers who have questioned the interest of digital natives in reading news (Associated Press-NORC Center of Public Affairs Research & The American Press Institute, 2015). The results of the study show that the youth in general want to keep informed on what is going on and thus consider it important to follow news. This is in line with the findings by Huang (2009), who suggests that young adults want to read news in order to be able to deal with issues happening around them. Furthermore, as Veinberg (2014) points out, consuming news is an activity that has not disappeared from the lives of the youth, it is just that the news consumption nowadays takes place in a different way, through online media which is accessed with the help of modern technology.

6.2 Managerial implications

This study came up with important findings regarding the preferences of digital natives in terms of news content and payment methods, the criteria behind their choice of using specific media, as well as how the generation of digital natives could be attracted to subscribing to a digital newspaper. As newspapers are struggling with losing audiences (The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2012), this study can be seen to provide the managers of media companies with valuable insight. By looking at the results of this study, the newspapers can come up with ways to alter their newspaper in such a way that the youth could be tempted to make a subscription and consequently the readership of the newspaper among young adults could be increased. As Internet users are nowadays able to utilize several cost-free online news pages and easily switch to the site of another news provider (Qayyum et al., 2010), it is of utmost importance for the newspapers to come up with ways to attract the young adults, who represent their future audience, to their web sites, as well as find a way to create an online newspaper that appeals to the youth to the extent that they would be ready to pay for accessing its content.

During their lives today’s young adults have got used to being able to obtain information from various sources, and oftentimes free of charge. As a result the youth have started to see news as a common commodity. (McDowell, 2011.) Therefore, in order to attract the digital natives to subscribing to a digital newspaper the newspapers should invest in providing the youth with deep, profound information that provides them with added value. In this study the respondents indicated such information is what they could imagine paying for. At the same time their interest in paying for the most basic news was really low. Therefore it can be suggested that newspapers should aim at offering young adults with more in-depth news that go beyond the surface and make the youth feel they receive value for their money.
Somewhat problematic is, however, that the wishes of the youth regarding news content do not always go hand in hand. At the same time when the youth want newspapers to provide them with profound, in-depth content, they place a high emphasis on the possibility of quickly obtaining information. Young adults prefer to use online news sites as they enable quick and easy acquisition of information (Costera Meijer, 2009). Furthermore, as the study results indicated, a major reason behind some respondents’ low news consumption was their lack of time. This is a real challenge for managers, as they would have to come up with ways to fulfill both the need for in-depth information and the possibility to quickly obtain information. As an example, one way to succeed in fulfilling young adults’ need for in-depth information could be to offer the readers weekly or monthly supplements that published more profound texts related to topical issues. At the same time, the lack of time for news consumption could be tackled with focusing on concise, short enough news articles that could be skimmed through quickly.

The interest of youth in a news topic is partly determined by the effect the topic has on the lives of the young people (Qayyum et al., 2010). On the basis of the empirical results it can be deducted that young adults want to read news that have some kind of a connection to their personal lives, such as news regarding their studies, future work, or area of specialization. The results also point out young adults’ interest in customizing the content of a newspaper on the basis of their individual preferences. As the study results also indicate that being able to receive information about one’s areas of interest increases the willingness of the youth in paying for accessing news, news organizations should invest in providing the youth with content that is of interest to them. Newspapers should also give their customers a chance to influence the type of news they receive and pay for. As the willingness of young adults to pay for news that are not of interest to them is really low, the managers should consider offering consumers a possibility of having an influence on the content of the digital newspaper.

Young adults appreciate comprehensive news offering and media companies should recognize the importance of providing the youth with such content. Currently, the content of Keskisuomalainen was seen somewhat restricted with an excessive focus on local news and therefore the respondents did not see the newspaper as an adequate enough a news source. Despite wanting to keep up to date on local happenings the digital natives want to be able to form a wider picture of what is going on around the world. Consequently, managers should pay attention to providing digital natives with wide news content in order to make the youth see their newspaper as the only necessary information source. Furthermore, the quality of information should also be taken into consideration by the managers as in the light of the current study it can be noted that young adults expect to receive news articles that are of high quality, referring both to the quality of writing and the quality of news content. Since it appeared that the willingness of digital natives to pay for
entertainment news is really low, managers should consider providing the youth with content that is factual and informative.

In order to increase the interest of young adults in making a subscription, the managers should consider eliminating the long subscription periods common for the newspaper industry. The youth see their lives exposed to change and as a consequence consider it a threat to commit to long subscription periods. Therefore it would be advisable for newspapers to consider if they could provide the youth with a possibility of quitting the subscription if they feel they no longer can continue subscribing to a newspaper. With such an option newspapers would be better able to cater to the needs of the digital generation.

As discussed previously, the current study confirms the findings of prior theory in that social media nowadays play a major role in young adults’ news consumption. Therefore, being active on Facebook, which was the most often used form of social media among the respondents, is advisable. However, as it is likely that in the future the youth will increasingly start utilizing other social platforms as well, newspapers should promote their presence in other social channels as well. This is important as in general, social media such as Twitter and Instagram are also important sources for news information for the digital natives (Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs & American Press Institute, 2015). Moreover, as the study revealed that for young adults mobile technologies act as an important means of acquiring news information, and mobile media act as a primary news source for several respondents, the newspaper managers should invest in a mobile application. This is an important factor potentially leading to an increase in readership of young adults as digital natives appreciate being able to conduct various activities with their smart phones (Oracle Corporation, 2015).

Easiness of use and fast speed were qualities that were highlighted by the study respondents in several occasions. In order to attract the youth to subscribing to a digital newspaper the media companies should come up with ways to facilitate the payment process. In particular, as the role of mobile technologies as a means of consuming news has been on the rise, managers should consider if mobile technologies could also be utilized to make the payment process easier and faster. When it comes to the student discount it should be taken into account when planning the company’s marketing activities. At the moment, despite newspapers provide students with discounts, not very many young adults are aware of their existence. Taking the discount into account in the company’s marketing efforts is important since a large amount of young adults sees the high news price as a major factor prohibiting them from subscribing to a newspaper.

Finally, it was found out that the respondents did not see online paywalls affecting them in any way. Several respondents mentioned they had found ways to dispose of online paywalls. This leads to a perception that the current paywalls do not function properly and are not as effective as they should be in order to restrict the readership of cost free news. As in several occasions the
online paywalls do not prohibit consumers from accessing chargeable content, newspapers should aim at finding ways to tackle the problem.

In conclusion, there are several ways in which newspaper managers can improve the image of their online newspaper in the eyes of the digital generation. As the study results show, young adults have not abandoned newspapers and their interest in news is relatively high, indicating that with the right content as well as payment and price related factors the youth can be attracted to subscribing to a digital newspaper. As a general guidance, in order to make their newspaper seem more tempting in the eyes of the youth, newspapers should publish content that appeals to young adults. This, in turn, requires constant research from the media companies regarding the likes and dislikes of the youth, in order to maintain an up-to-date, comprehensive understanding of the audience’s needs. The digital generation is more independent than its predecessors and has got used to getting what it wants, where and when it wants. The youth want to gain control over their lives and by enabling them to impact on the newspaper content, the newspapers can succeed in giving the young adults such feeling of control. Lastly, as today’s young adults place a high emphasis on attributes such as easiness and fastness, by offering the youth content and payment methods that fulfill those needs, newspapers can better answer the needs of the digital generation.

6.3 Reliability and validity of the study

Academic research is traditionally assessed with respect to validity and reliability (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006, 24). The reliability of a study refers to the ability to yield the same research result again and again with the same technique that was used to obtain the data. In qualitative research, in order to achieve reliability, the researcher should aim at methodological transparency by comprehensively describing the process of collecting data, how the interpretations were constituted and how the researcher came to his conclusions. (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006, 27.) Research validity, on the other hand, measures whether the research succeeded in measuring what it aimed at measuring (Stenbacka, 2001). It indicates the correctness of the proposals and generalizations suggested by the researcher, such as how trustworthy the arguments of the researcher can be considered to be (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006, 32). In the following chapters, the quality of the research, its reliability and validity are evaluated.

Even though oftentimes utilized in all types of research the ways to evaluate quantitative research, such as reliability and validity, are not always appropriate for qualitative research. The reason why reliability cannot always be considered relevant when assessing qualitative research lies in the impossibility of distinguishing between the researcher and the method used. If qualitative research is evaluated using reliability as a criterion, the outcome is likely to be that the study was not successful. Instead of using reliability to
assess qualitative research, a profound description of the whole research process, allowing conditional intersubjectivity, can be considered as an indicator of a good quality when a qualitative research method is used. However, even though better applicable with quantitative research, reliability and validity are important in qualitative research as well in order to be able to rationalize the study results, and are therefore discussed. (Stenbacka, 2001.)

For the reliability of this study, all the research phases and methods used in the study have been described accurately. Research reliability also reflects the fact that the research process is conducted in an organized and rigorous way. For instance, to support the reliability of a study, the interviews need to be carefully recorded and transcribed. (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006, 28.) In the current research, all the interviews were recorded and transcribed and the transcriptions enabled further examination of the empirical data. To increase the reliability of the study, the transcriptions were done thoroughly, as incomplete transcripts may complicate the data analysis process (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006, 28). In the data collection phase, a theme-based interview form was used to make sure all the respondents answered the same questions to support the achievement of the study objectives. Moreover, each interview was conducted following the same interview structure. In this study all the interviews were recorded and transcribed and the transcriptions used to analyze the data. As the data collection phase was conducted on the basis of a theme-based interview form, the same theme-based categorization was used when the data was analyzed. Quotations from the interviews were used to support the analysis of the research results.

According to Stenbacka (2001), in the case of qualitative research, research validity can be achieved if the informants well represent the population in focus and are allowed to express their feelings freely based on their knowledge. Accordingly, in this study, although the interviews were semi-structured the respondents were recommended to open up about the issue in question and their answers were not restricted in any way, contributing to the validity of the study. Furthermore, the empirical data was gathered by interviewing the students of Jyväskylä University, all of whom belonged to the digital generation that was in the focus of the study.

In order to establish validity in a research, the arguments made by the researcher need to be somehow uniform with the data on which the arguments are based on (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006, 26). In this study all the claims made by the researcher when discussing the research were based on existing theory as well as the empirical data obtained. What also constitutes to the validity of the current research is that the data obtained from the interviews seemed adequate as the answers of the respondents started to resemble one another. As Eskola and Suoranta (1999, 216) state, it is of utmost importance to pay attention to the sufficiency of the data. In qualitative research, one way of establishing that a sufficient amount of data has been collected is the saturation of the data.

Research validity can be further divided into internal and external validity (Eskola & Suoranta, 1999, 214). External validity describes the degree to which
the research results can be generalized to other situations (Bryman & Bell, 2011, 43). Internal validity, on the other hand, is concerned with whether the data collection process and the research design are such that they make it possible for the readers to make deductions with confidence (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000, 339).

In qualitative research achieving external validity is usually not a major purpose. This can be seen to result from the fact that when using a qualitative research method the respondents are rarely chosen arbitrarily and random selection can be considered as the best possible way of generalizing the findings to a larger population. Furthermore, in qualitative research the aim oftentimes is to indicate the unique behavior of a specific group instead of creating results that can be applied to a broader context. Therefore, when considering whether the findings of a qualitative research can be generalized across social settings it should be remembered that the more homogenous the people and the circumstances of a research setting are with those you want to generalize the results on, the more trustworthy the generalization is likely to be. In order to enable the readers of a qualitative research report to know if they can generalize the study findings to other social settings, the researcher should, in his study, describe the people that took part in the study, how the informants were chosen, the methods used for data collection and how the data was analyzed. With such information the readers of the report are able to make informed decisions about whether or not they can generalize the information to a certain context. (Johnson, 1997.) In this study, to support the external validity all the aforementioned information has been carefully described in the methodology section consequently enabling the reader to draw conclusions on whether generalizations can be applied.

Bryman and Bell (2011, 395) quote LeCompte and Goetz (1982) by stating that internal validity indicates whether or not the researcher’s observations correspond to the theoretical ideas developed. Internal validity can be seen to reflect the harmony between the theoretical and conceptual definitions of the research. That is, there has to be a logical relationship between the theoretical background of the study, the conceptual specifications as well as the methodological solutions used. (Eskola & Suoranta, 1999, 214.) To support the internal validity of the study, the theoretical and empirical phases of the study are in line with each other. Furthermore, to undertake internal validity, every research phase has been described in detail in order to enable the readers of the report to follow the progress of the study. All in all, as the study answered the research questions set at the beginning of the process, the validity of the study can be considered satisfactory.

6.4 Limitations of the research

Such as all academic research, this study has its limitations. Firstly, the study is limited in its focus to a certain context – the news consumption behavior of young adults, and therefore the study results cannot, at least in totality, be
generalized to other sectors outside of the news market. The subject can be considered to require further research, in which the amount of respondents is higher and represents a larger audience. One limitation of the study is that the empirical research was conducted among university students all of whom were students at Jyväskylä University. The study results can only be seen to give insight on how people with academic background consume different media and how they behave when consuming news. It should be noted, that as the results only represent the viewpoint of university students the results might have been somewhat different if the interviewees included people with a lower level of education or young adults who have already entered work life.

It should also be noted that despite the original idea of interviewing both people that live in the city of Jyväskylä and people residing in the city’s sub-regions, all the respondents were based in Jyväskylä the time the data collection took place. Having chosen to conduct the research among university students it turned out to be extremely difficult to find students who lived in the surrounding areas as nearly all students of Jyväskylä University live in Jyväskylä or in other larger cities, not in the sub-regions. Even though people originally from the sub-regions of Jyväskylä were found for the study, it should be kept in mind that there might have been some variation in the results if people from smaller towns nearby had been interviewed.

This study utilized the qualitative approach to provide the newspaper managers with important insight regarding the news consumption behavior of digital natives. The methodology used in this study has its advantages as qualitative methods enable the researcher to obtain deep and profound information of the phenomenon under investigation, but at the same time, however, lacks the ability to generalize the findings to a larger crowd (Alasuutari, 1999, 231). Furthermore, interviews as a data collection method have some deficiencies. In qualitative interviews there exists the problem of the respondents answering to the interview questions under pressure. Furthermore, it is commonplace for the informants to modify their answers in order to appear knowledgeable. Finally, the researcher may unintentionally influence the behavior of the respondent. (Myers & Newman, 2007.)

6.5 Suggestions for further research

As digital natives represent the future news consumers and as the digital technologies are all the time becoming more and more ubiquitous in our daily lives, it is important to continue researching the consumption patterns and value drivers of the digital natives also in the future. The current research has shown that young adults’ news consumption increasingly happens via social and mobile media and consequently more information should be obtained about such media and the way news companies can better utilize them in their activities.
The current research was conducted among young adults currently studying at the University of Jyväskylä. It would be interesting to see whether other demographic variables have an impact on the way news is consumed among the digital native generation. The current study has shown that news price and the small amount of disposable income are factors restricting the news consumption of digital native students. Consequently, if a similar study was conducted among digital natives that have already entered work life the results might be somewhat different as their earnings are likely to be higher than those of students. Therefore, it would be interesting to investigate how the attitude of such young adults with regards to paying for news differs if it does. In addition, the present study contended that the interest of digital natives in news is on a high level and indicated that the majority of study respondents read news on a regular basis. Worth of investigating would also be the news consumption behavior of young adults with a lower-level education in order to see if the level of education is a significant factor in predicting the news consumption habits of the youth. As the present study did not succeed in interviewing digital natives residing in the sub-regions of the city of Jyväskylä conducting a research among such individuals is recommendable. This would make it possible to compare whether the place of residence plays a role in the way news media are consumed.

This study used individual semi-structured interviews to investigate the news consumption behavior of young adults. The study could be repeated by utilizing other research methods, such as focus groups, to see, for instance, if such a research setting encouraged the respondents to invent new ideas about how digital newspapers could be made more appealing. Finally, a similar study could be conducted after some amendments to digital newspapers with regards to content and payment related factors have been made. This would reveal whether the changes have affected the opinions and news consumption behavior of the digital native generation.
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Parrat, S. 2010. Consumo de medios de comunicación y actitudes hacia la prensa por parte de los universitarios. Zer, 28 (15), 133-149.


APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Interview form in Finnish

Taustatiedot:
- Ikä
- Tilaatko sanomalehteä (paperi/digi)?
- Opiskelija vai työelämässä? Kouluutus?
- Paikkakunta? Mistä kotoisin?
- Omistatko tabletin?
- Teetkö paljon verkkooostoksia (tietokone, tabletti, puhelin)
- Käytätkö paljon sovelluksia mobiililaitteilla?

Median merkitys ja rooli / yleinen uutiskäyttävyminen
1. Seuraatko uutisia? Mitä uutisia seuraat?
2. Millaisista lähteistä seuraat uutisia ja mikä saa sinut valitsemaan kyseiset lähteet?

Verkkomediat
3. Millaisia uutisia luet verkossa? Millaisista lähteistä?
4. Millä perusteella valitset verkkomedian, jota käytät ja kuinka usein seuraat sitä?
5. Kun silmäilet uutistarjontaa verkossa, millaisen uutinen kiinnittää huomiosi?

Maksaminen ja hinta
6. Mitä mieltä olet verkkouutisten maksullisuudesta?
7. Mitä mieltä olet maksumuureista ja miten toimit sellaisen tullessa eteen?
8. Millaisesta verkkolehdestä olisit valmis maksamaan? Miksi?
9. Kumpi merkitsee sinulle enemmän uutisia kuluttaessasi, uutisten hinta vai sisälto?
10. Millaiset maksuvaihtoehdot lisäisivät kiinnostustasi tilata digilehti?

Maakuntalehti ja paikallisuuutiset
11. Seuraatko paikallisuuutisia ja kaipaatko niitä? Mitä maakuntalehti sinulle merkitsee?

Paras mahdollinen digilehti
12. Millainen olisi paras mahdollinen Keskisuomalainen digitaalisessa muodossa (maksuvaihtoehotojen ja sisällön suhteen)?
Appendix 2. Interview form in English.

**Background information**
- Age
- Do you subscribe to a newspaper (print/digital)?
- Do you study or work? What is your educational background?
- Place of residence? Hometown?
- Do you own a tablet?
- Do you shop a lot online (computer, tablet, mobile phone)?
- Do you use a lot of mobile applications?

**The significance and role of media / general news consumption**
1. Do you follow news? What news do you follow?
2. From which sources do you follow news and what makes you choose such news sources?

**Digital media**
3. What kind of news do you follow in digital media? From which sources?
4. What makes you choose the digital media you use and how often do you use it?
5. When you go through news in digital media what kind of a news article draws your attention?

**Paying for news and their price**
6. What do you think of the chargeable nature of online news?
7. What do you think of online paywalls and how do you react to them?
8. What kind of a digital newspaper would you be ready to pay for? Why?
9. Which do you consider more important when consuming news, news price or news content?
10. What kind of payment options would increase your interest in subscribing to a digital newspaper?

**Regional newspaper and local news**
11. Do you follow local news and do you miss them? What does a regional newspaper mean to you?

**The ideal online newspaper**
12. Please describe the best possible digital version of Keskisuomalainen with regards to payment options and news content.