

In Flanders Fields: News media repertoires in Dutch-speaking Belgium

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Abstract:

This article presents the Flemish part of an international study on news use and outlines seven Flemish news media repertoires. To examine these repertoires, an integrated mixed-method approach was adopted, combining an in-depth qualitative analysis of 36 in-situ interviews with a guiding Q-methodological analysis. This Q-sort technique required the informants to sort 36 types of news media outlets on a bi-polar dimension ranging from 'does not play a role in my life' to 'plays an important role in my life'. The Flemish news media repertoires are each characterized by a specific type of news user: (1) the Quality seeking traditionalist, (2) the Quality seeking cosmopolitan, (3) the Digital up-to-dater, (4) the Headline-based snacker, (5) the Critical omnivore, (6) the Sports lover and the (7) Collateral user.

Keywords: cross-media, news consumption, news audiences, news repertoires, Q methodology, democratic engagement, Flanders

Belgium is a federal state, in which the communities Flanders (Dutch-speaking) and Wallonia (French-speaking) regulate culture-based issues, including media. As a result, the Belgian media landscape is divided into two media spheres, depending on these communities: one Flemish and one Walloon mediascape. This article aims to unveil the diversity of Flemish news media repertoires. As such, this article is atypical within the international Q study on news consumption.¹ Whereas the other studies have been performed nationally, the Belgian case has been divided into two studies: one on Flanders and another on Wallonia.

The Belgian news scape is characterized by (1) social responsibility of the media (e.g. PSB), (2) historically a strong party press, which has shifted to neutrality and commercial media in recent years, (3) external press pluralism in print, (4) strong professionalization and (5) internal press regulation (Raeymaeckers & De Dobbelaer, 2015). As a result, like most

north or central European countries, Belgium is classified by Hallin and Mancini (2004) as a Democratic Corporatist Model. Raeymaeckers and De Dobbelaer (2015) point out that some nuances must be made when looking at the journalistic culture. The Flemish news landscape experiences North-European influences and the press council in Flanders was established rather late.

In their recent analysis of media systems, Peruško, Vozab and Čuvalo (2013) agreed that Belgium has a rather moderate media system. They classified Belgium within The European Mainstream Model, which is characterized by middle values of party and owner influence (political and economic parallelism) and a journalistic culture with middle values of professionalism and independence.

Contextualization: the Flemish news scape

In order to understand news use, one must first grasp the broader news environment in which audiences find their news. In Flanders, the news scape is very dense, with a duopoly for both the newspaper and broadcast industries. The channel diversity is large, the source diversity is very limited.

Print newspapers – Within Belgium, Flanders has - like Wallonia - its own print daily newspapers, including up-market, popular, local, financial and free newspapers. While at first sight the Flemish media landscape looks quite diversified, the economic integration is strong, with only two dominant media groups (*De Persgroep* and *Mediahuis*). Each group has several kinds of newspapers reaching out to different audiences. These groups are owned by family shareholders and are also active in the broadcasting industry (see below). Mediahuis publishes the up-market daily newspaper *De Standaard*, the mid-market newspaper *Het Nieuwsblad/De Gentenaar* and the local/regional newspapers *Het Belang van Limburg* and *Gazet van Antwerpen*. The second group, De Persgroep, produces the up-market newspaper *De Morgen* and the mid-market newspaper *Het Laatste Nieuws* (which has the largest circulation). The economic and financial newspaper (*De Tijd*) is part of a consortium made of Rossel and De Persgroep. The free daily newspaper *Metro* is the property of Rossel and Concentra (linked to Mediahuis).

Beside daily newspapers, several weekly or monthly magazines are published by three main companies: VNU/Sanoma, Roularta and De Persgroep. The first one controls the women's magazines and the majority of television magazines. The second one (Roularta) has a monopoly on newsmagazines (*Knack*, *Trends* and *De Zondag*). The last one (De Persgroep) produces lifestyle and television magazines.

Television and Radio Market – Public service broadcasting (PSB) is historically important in Belgium, and één (mainstream channel by PSB VRT) is the most popular channel. The market shares by descending scores are as follows: Dutch-speaking public service TV VRT 36,9%, commercial TV of the Mediahuis group 29,4%, commercial TV from De Vijver Mediaholding and the rest are smaller channels, including local ones.

In the radio landscape, the public service broadcasting dominates with a total market share of about 60%. The main VRT stations are: Radio 2: 28,4%; Studio Brussel: 12%; MNM: 10,4%; Radio 1: 6,6%. Then come the commercial radio stations of Medialaan with 23,5% of the market share (Q-Music: 14,7%; Joe FM: 8,7%). One Dutch commercial radio (Nostalgie) accounts for 6% of the market share.

Digital Media (Internet and Social Media) – According to the Digimeter 2015 report (2016), most Flemish households have at least one computer (90.1%) and are connected to the Internet (91.2%). Eight in ten use the computer on a daily basis. The most common daily internet activities on a computer are reading (77.1%) and sending e-mails (65.8%), browsing information (68.0%), social networking (55.0%) and news consumption (50.2%).

The most popular news website is the website of *Het Laatste Nieuws: HLN.be* has daily over two million visits (CIM, 2016), followed by *Nieuwsblad.be*. The most popular news website of an up-market newspaper is *Standaard.be*, almost double compared to *De Morgen*. The news website of public broadcaster VRT Sporza (the PSB sports brand) attracts 401 745 visitors, slightly more than the general news site of VRT *deredactie.be* (383 268). Private broadcaster VTM reaches 219 895 average daily visits (note: this number refers to the broadcasters website and does not focus on news only).

Next to these well-known news brands, new market players are trying to gain the audiences' attention. Newsmonkey had 77 105 daily visits during the last quarter of 2015 (CIM, 2016). Two alternative news platforms (i.e. *Apache* and *De Wereld Morgen*) have built a small but loyal audience, with respectively 3% and 8% of the Flemish internet users (i.e. 90% of total Flemish population) consulting these websites (Van Damme, Evens & Verdegem, 2014). With only 3% to 4% of the Flemings using news aggregators to consume news, these alternative sources remain very limited in Flanders, possibly due to the lack of a local aggregator or a strong tendency to rely on well-known news brands (Van Damme, Courtois, Verbrugge & De Marez, 2015).

Among the Flemings, 55 percent consumes news via social media via at least one device (Digimeter 2015, 2016). Digimeter (2016) found that one in five Facebook users appoint news consumption as the main reason to use the platform. For Twitter, this number increases to one in three users.

Method

To examine the various news media repertoires in Flanders, an integrated mixed-method (Schrøder, 2012) approach was adopted, combining an in-depth qualitative analysis (*in situ* interviews) with a guiding Q-methodological analysis. This method has proven to be useful to unveil the complex and multifaceted field of news consumption (e. g. Schrøder & Kobbarnagel, 2010; Schrøder, 2015).

Description of the sample

In order to achieve a distributed sample, thirty-six informants were recruited, based on four variables, as presented in **Table 2**.

Table 2: Sample distribution of Flemish informants (N=36)

Gender	Female	18
	Male	18
Education	Lower level	12
	Bachelor level	12
	Master level	12
Age	18-34	12
	35-60	12
	61+	12
Geography	Capital ¹ city	12
	Major city	12
	Provincial	12

¹ As only 22% of the Brussels citizens speaks Dutch (Janssens, 2013), the capital city was operationalized as provincial capital, including Brussels.

Appendix 1 shows the characteristics of each informant, presenting the gender, age, location, educational level and news media repertoire.

Description of the field work

Each informant was interviewed for on average one hour and a half in his or her domestic context. The interview was based on a semi-structured topic list, starting with a general question probing into an ordinary 'day in the life', gradually moving on to questions about how news fits into this day in the life, and to what extent and why it might be important to follow current affair updates. While doing so, issues of social, spatial, temporal and technological circumstances were addressed.

Halfway during the interview, a *Q-sort* task was presented. This technique of data collection requires informants to sort a number of statements on a fixed normal distribution with a predefined number of positions, according to a specified dimension. Each position is thus associated with a numerical value (see **Figure 1**). In this case, the statements were 36 types of news media (see **Appendix 1**). During this sorting task, informants were encouraged to reflect aloud, verbally considering their dynamic sorting of the 36 news media, following a bi-polar dimension ranging from 'does not play a role in my life' to 'plays an important role in my life'.

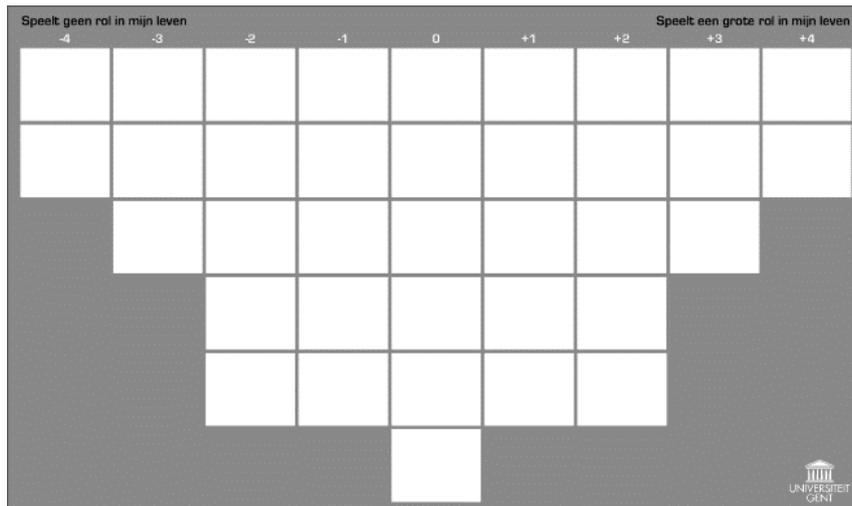


Figure 1: Q-sort frame with predefined positions

Results

Two types of data were collected from each informant: in-depth qualitative narrative data and quantitative Q-sort data. These data were then combined into a general dataset, in which informants are variables, and news media are cases. Hence, the correlation matrix derived from this dataset represented relations between informants, taking into account how important they find the 36 news media.

In order to find patterns in the 36 informant sorts, a two-phased analysis was performed. In first instance, a principal component analysis was run, using the common eigen-value over one criterion. This rendered a ten-component solution; hence ten different news repertoires were distinguished, explaining 81% of the variance in participant sorting variance. However, one component contained only one participant. Furthermore, the scree plot (Figure 2) displayed two drops in information (defined as elbows). The first was located at the fourth component, which was too small to capture sufficient diversity in the informant pool, whereas the second was situated at the seventh component.

A second analysis, constraining the number of components to a more parsimonious set of seven led to an explained variance of 72%. Moreover, each component had at least three significant primary loadings. Hence, this simple structure was deemed most suitable and therefore retained for the study's focal qualitative analysis. These components or groups of informants were used to guide the qualitative analysis, which is the focal point in this study.

Appendix 3 contains the rotated component matrix, summarizing the significant component loadings. These range from -1 to 1 and reflect the extent to which a single informant 'fits' a certain news media repertoire. Per component – or news media repertoire – factor scores were calculated. The higher a factor score for a specific news medium, the more it plays a role in that specific repertoire.

Seven news media repertoires

Guided by the principal component analysis, seven news media repertoires were distinguished, each characterized by a specific type of news user: (1) the Quality seeking traditionalist, (2) the Quality-seeking cosmopolitan, (3) the Digital up-to-dater, (4) the Headline-based snacker, (5) the Critical omnivore, (6) the Sports lover and the (7) Collateral user. Each of these repertoires is explained below.

The names of the repertoires highlight the most defining characteristic(s), such as news content preference, the platform preference or mode of news use. The repertoires and their characteristics are presented in **Table 3**. These characteristics are based on labels adopted by Swart, Peters and Broersma (2016) and Schrøder (2011). The latter used the notion of perceived news worthwhileness: an equation audiences make, balancing which news is worth their while on seven dimensions: including time spent, public connection, normative pressures and price.

Figure 2 maps the various news repertoires on two axes: (1) the platform preference of a repertoire (from traditional to digital) and (2) the level of news contextualisation (headline scanning to contextualized news).

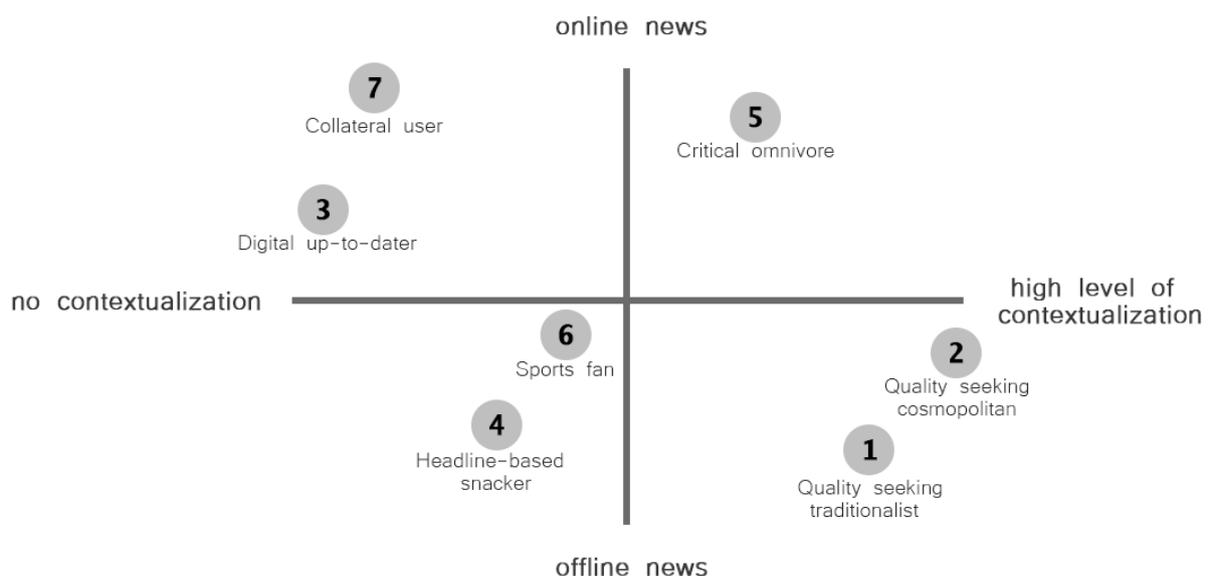


Figure 2: Comparative graph of news repertoires, plotted by platform preference and level of contextualisation.

R1: Quality-seeking traditionalist

This repertoire clusters informants with a strong preference towards news they perceive as being of high-quality, which they seek solely by traditional sources (i.e. print and TV newscasts). They have an outspoken interest in staying up to date, 'but cannot be seen as

Table 3: Media repertoires and thematic characteristics (inspired by Swart, Peters & Broersma, 2016; Schröder, 2011)

News repertoire	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7
Characteristics	Quality-seeking traditionalist	Quality-seeking cosmopolitan	Digital up-to-dater	Headline-based snacker	Critical omnivore	Sports lover	Collateral user
<i>Most important news media</i>	National news magazines; current affairs TV; Regional/local TV news; Up-market newspaper, TV broadcast on public channel	International TV broadcast; Up-market newspaper online; Up-market print newspaper; Radio broadcast on public channel; Online news public broadcaster	Tabloid newspaper online; Radio broadcast 24 hour news; Facebook; Other social media; Radio broadcast on public channel	News by email or SMS Text-TV; Tabloid newspaper; Local (bi-weekly) newspaper; Current affairs TV, light	Born-online news media; Up-market newspaper online; Online news public broadcaster; Facebook; Current affairs TV, serious	Twitter; Tabloid newspaper; Text-TV; TV broadcast on public channel; Weekly news magazines; newspaper, online	News via online video platforms; Free daily newspaper; broadcast on newspaper; News via aggregators or personalized services; News by email or SMS; TV broadcast on public channel;
	News by email or SMS; International broadcaster online news; Text-TV; Tabloid newspaper online; Twitter	Local newspaper online; Blogs; Born-online news media; Local TV broadcast; Facebook	Free daily newspaper; Non-media news websites; Local TV broadcast; International TV broadcast; Text-TV	Free daily newspaper online; Other social media; Weekly news magazines; newspaper, online; Non-media news websites; Twitter	Free daily newspaper; Local (bi-weekly) newspaper; Radio broadcast commercial channel; TV broadcast on 24 hour news	Up-market newspaper online; Born-online news media; News by email or SMS; Professional magazines; Text-TV; Professional	Born-online news media; Radio broadcast 24 hour news; Local newspaper online; aggregators or personalized services
<i>Least important news media</i>							

	Civic duty	Civic duty;	Social connection (personal and professional)	Social connection (personal)	Civic duty; Social connection (personal)	Monitoring; Social connection (personal)	Social connection (family)
<i>Motivation to use news</i>		Compulsion					
<i>Value of news use</i>	Awareness	Knowledge and awareness	Awareness	Structure everyday life	Relaxation and understanding	Knowledge	Collateral consumption
<i>Likelihood to pay for news</i>	Average-high	Average-high	Low-average	Average-low	High-Very high	Average-high	Very low-low
<i>Technological preference</i>	Traditional	No preference	Digital	Traditional	No preference	Traditional	No preference
<i>Geographic focus</i>	Local, national, international	International	Local, national	Local, national, international	Local, international	Local, international	International
<i>Mode of news use</i>	Lean-back	Lean-back	Lean-back	Lean-back	Lean-forward	Lean-forward	Lean-back
<i>Demographics</i>	61+, 12-15y education	35-60	18-34	Male, lower education, 61+	61+, 12-15y education	Lower educated	Female, 18-35

news fanatics' (Informant-16, 60+, F, 12-15y education, capital city). The informants see consuming news as a necessity to function as a critical citizen in a democratic society, both locally, nationally, in Europe and the whole world. They hereby stress the importance of looking further than one's immediate environment. Informant-30 (60+, M, 15y+ education, capital city) for example complains about the vast amount of attention that is being paid to rather small events, such as a national strike.

Informant-30 (60+, M, 15y+ education, capital city): There was only one item presented in the newscast: the strike. [...] The whole day not even one item on foreign affairs was mentioned. Nothing. More things do happen, you know.

While this repertoire sees following the news as a civic duty, they will not actively engage or participate with news. Informants tend to rely on news outlets that are easily integrated into their busy schedule. They prefer a laid-back mode of news use, rather than actively seeking news. 'I hate it when I need to seek [news]. It's not that I do not know how, I just really don't like it. It makes me nervous', Informant-16 (60+, F, 12-15y education, capital city) says.

To this repertoire, willingness to pay for news is average-high; however, most informants cancelled earlier subscriptions. Informants want to capture all the news, and they feel it is a waste of money to pay for news that is not being consumed. 'I actually found it pleasant, reading the newspaper, but now I do not have the time. And as a result, I cannot spend money on it' (Informant-1, 35-60, F, -12y education, rural). Lack of time is the major barrier for news use, since informants feel it is hard to incorporate print media in the daily routine. As a result, broadcast news media are preferred, because 'if you lack time, you profit from quick news updates as presented by TV or radio.' (Informant-1, 35-60, F, -12y education, rural).

This repertoire prefers traditional media outlets. They do however feel that online media have gained importance: 'you cannot deny that it [online content] is coming. Or that it's here' (Informant-14, 60+, M, 15y+ education, major city). Informants have a tendency to apologize for the fact that they do not use digital news outlets. Online platforms are seen as useful for younger generations. News on screens is not considered to be as practical as for example printed news.

Informant-1 (35-60, F, -12y education, rural): [Newspapers] give you a better overview. You have that whole paper lying in front of you. You can leaf through the newspaper, or go back. [...] Online you have to click and click. No, I do not like that.

They are however not reluctant to incorporate online news services. When no other news outlet is available (such as when the participants are on holiday), they will turn to their tablet to consume news.

R2: *Quality-seeking cosmopolitan*

The second repertoire feels a strong urge to know what happens in the world (rather than what happens nearby). Being informed is a necessity, otherwise informants feel *'unworldly'* (Informant-12, 35-60, F, -12y education, capital city). In order to get informed, they consume legacy media, both via traditional and digital platforms, such as PSB news and up-market newspapers. Informants consume news they perceive as *'high quality news'*, often enriched with news contextualization. The Quality-seeking cosmopolitan stresses the importance of *'neutral news'* or news free from political or commercial interference. In the worthwhileness equation (Schrøder, 2011), the public connection weighs the heaviest, both for democratic purposes and the everyday life. Following the news is considered a civic duty:

Informant-21 (60+, F, 15+y education, capital city): Yes, I do find [news] very important. One must follow it. You have to know what happens these days. Um, I think it is your duty. [Sighs] We live in a democracy and must cherish that.

Informants explicitly refer to international topics. Informant-5 (35-60, F, 12-15y education, rural) states *'we are expected'* to follow topics such as the war in Syria and the power of Islamic State. As a consequence, regional news is not considered important at all, that is *'superseded'* (Informant-18) in the current global world. Both Q-cards concerning regional news (Informant-3, 35-60, M, -12y education, rural and Informant-22, 18-34, F, -12y education, capital city) landed up in the bottom 5 during the Q sorting task.

However, even though consuming news is found to be a civic duty, the Quality-seeking cosmopolitan mostly consumes news in a passive way. To them, news should be served. This lean-back way of consuming news is also reflected in the absent interest to participate. Little is said related to the participatory potential of news outlets, and when the informants talk about engaging with news they are rather negative because *'too many people share their opinions'* (Informant-21, 60+, F, 15+y education, capital city). They hereby refer to social media (and more specifically Facebook), where too many opinions *'that fail to fit the facts'* (Informant-3, 35-60, M, -12y education, rural) are being shared. Three informants do see Twitter as a news platform, but that they have not been using the platform so far.

The Quality-seeking cosmopolitan preferably turns to trusted news sources such as broadcasters and up-market newspapers. Looking at the broadcasters, both radio and TV newscasts are appreciated. Informant-3 (35-60, M, -12y education, rural) considers PSB a valuable news source, because they *'observe the news closely and react rapidly'*. PSB is said to bring *'trustworthy news'*. Radio news is *'short, does not take long and is broadcast every hour. Those repetitions make it easier to remember it'* (Informant-5, 35-60, F, 12-15y education, rural). Also, the radio news brings more recent updates (Informant-28, 35-60, M, 15+y education, major city). Whereas the radio is seen as a quick update, up-market

newspaper news is valued for its slowness. ‘You can read it in your proper time, whereas news via radio and TV is being pushed’ (Informant-28, 35-60, M, 15+2y education, major city). This up-market newspaper content is read both on paper and on screen. Two informants do however express an explicit preference toward paper newspapers (compared to online), because reading a newspaper is more enjoyable.

Informant-12 (35-60, F, -12y education, capital city): I really don’t like reading the newspaper online. [...] It is like nostalgia. [...] Moreover,] I find it pleasant to read the newspaper when people are surrounding me.

Informant-21 (60+, F, 15+y education, capital city) addresses another aspect: paper is less timely. She has a subscription on the weekly news magazine *Knack* and states that she always reads *Knack* delayed, which gives her more time to properly understand the information and news updates presented in the magazine. This repertoire is thus willing to pay for news, more specifically press media. Half of this repertoire has a newspaper subscription (all on up-market newspaper *De Standaard*).

The most important news medium for The Quality-seeking cosmopolitan is however international TV broadcasts, which is a unique outlet among the seven repertoires. The repertoire is satisfied with the Flemish news landscape, however, it is said that some international news outlets (both TV and print) are of higher quality:

Informant-28 (35-60, M, +15y education, major city): In The Netherlands for example they have more up-market newspapers. *De Volkskrant* for example: that does not exist in Flanders. [...] They are more neutral than *De Standaard*. In *De Standaard* they do use big and catchy headlines. They can’t resist to add some sensation or large pictures... *NRC Handelsblad* in The Netherlands is quite boring, but at least they try to make news as correct as possible. That is something I miss in *De Standaard*.

R3: Digital up-to-dater

The Digital Up-to-dater is characterized by his or her continuous, convenient news use. News updates should be short and clear. As a result, they combine radio news with digital news outlets. Their second-ranked news outlet is radio broadcast 24 hour news. The highest-ranked news outlet is online news provided by national broadbloid newspapers (i.e. a broad page tabloid). Other online news is being consumed via social media, mainly via Facebook (rank 3) and other social media (rank 4). Twitter is not included in the top five news outlets.

This repertoire prefers news that fits into the situation easily. Radio is listened to during commute, and websites are consulted at work. As a result, less news is consumed (digitally) during the weekend:

Informant-10 (35-60, M, 15+y education, rural): Uhm. During the working week, I will read more news sites at work. That is just a short time block, like one or two minutes to check what has happened.

They prefer news websites since they are ‘easy, accessible and clear’ (Informant-27, 18-34, M, 15+y education, major city). A quick look on the website is enough to see the latest news. However, it does happen that members look for more information on a news item of special interest.

While both news via Facebook and news via other social media ended up in the top 5 of this cluster, none of the informants is a real social media news consumer. They acknowledge that these networks might be a valuable news source, yet they did not consider them to be news sources.

Informant-7 (18-34, F, -12y education, rural): Well you cannot really call [content on social media] news. Instagram for example is not really news. [...] It is a nice way to see what people have been up to, but it is not world news.

I: It isn't world news, indeed. But users can mention world news issues?

Informant-: Yes, they do sometimes. Yes.

Social media do not play an important role in news use, except for Informant-31 (18-34, F, 15+y education, major city). She likes the algorithmic filtering of the news and assumes the most interesting news will pop up. However, even more interesting for her is the possibility to see what her friends read.

Members (all but one) want to stay updated on a broad range of topics: ‘whatever is going on in Belgium. Preferably the general news’ (Informant-09). The main motivation to consume news is social connection in a professional environment. They feel the pressure to stay updated (‘it is a must’ (Informant-31, 18-34, F, 15+y education, major city) – and do so – but they do not enjoy consuming news. Up-market newspapers are found to be quite boring and TV newscasts are less popular.

The attitude to TV newscasts can take two forms: while Informant-20 finds it redundant (‘I check news websites throughout the day, so it is not necessary to rewatch everything on the newscast’), Informant-09 watches PSB newscasts on a daily basis. She likes the images that go along with the news, together with the fact that ‘it addresses everything! The topics are varied... and concise at the same time’.

R4: *Headline-based snacker*

This news media repertoire is characterized by short, headline-based news updates. Personal connection is the main motivator to consume news: news serves as a subject to talk about, or as a means to structure life.

I: Do you consider news as important?

Informant-8 (60+, F, -12y education, rural): Pffft: yes and no. I can live without news. I always enjoy being on holiday and know absolutely nothing. So uhm... no, it is not that important to me.

I: But you do follow the news?

Informant-8: I follow the news because you have to know what... well, if you are with people and each time you have to say 'I didn't know'. That's just dull.

The Headline-based snacker finds news updates via email and Text-TV. In addition, newspapers are popular, such as daily broadsheet newspapers (rank 3) and local newspapers (rank 4). The top 5 is completed by light TV shows, addressing current affairs.

The traditional updater uses (news) media as a companion. Informant-32 (60+, M, -12y education, major city) is retired and lives alone. To him, following the news is a way to keep a connection with the outside world. His everyday life is structured around his news use: in the morning, he visits the library to read three different newspapers (up-market paper *De Standaard* and popular titles *Het Laatste Nieuws* and *Het Nieuwblad*), in the afternoon, radio keeps him company and in the evening he watches three different newscasts. However, even though he spends a lot of time with news, he does not identify himself with his news use, nor does he stress the importance as a citizen to stay up-to-date. In terms of technological preference, the Traditional updater balances between different platforms. Text TV gives an easy overview, newsletters provide breaking news and newspapers give context.

Informant-32 (60+, M, -12y education, major city): One is better informed via newspapers, compared to television. [...] You get to know more into detail.

To Informant-8 (60+, F, -12y education, rural) however, this newspaper preference has nothing to do with the technological affordances. He has been thinking about cancelling his subscription, but he would miss filling in the crosswords too much. His daily routine is wrapped around his newspaper: 'in the morning I completely browse through the newspaper, except the sports pages, and then I fill in the crosswords. And during lunch, I fill in the Sudoku'. Furthermore, he likes the repetitive and structuring format of newspapers: the same news on the same place.

R5: Critical omnivore

This repertoire unites the informants who are 'addicted' (Informant-17, 35-60, F, -12y education, major city) to news. They combine fast updates with more elaborate and thorough news items. Their number one news outlet is news from born-online news media, followed by online news provided by legacy media (up-market newspapers and PSB newscast). Also, news is being consumed via Facebook (rank 4) and Current affairs on TV

(rank 5). Whereas their four most important news media are digital outlets, they all consume news via traditional news outlets as well. All informants have a newspaper subscription (popular and or up-market newspapers) and a subscription on the news magazine Knack.

The value of news is relaxation: the critical omnivore enjoys staying up to date, even though words as 'too much' (Informant-17, 35-60, F, -12y education, major city) and 'news junkie' (Informant-4, 18-34, M, 12-15y education, capital city) are used as well. They consult news throughout the day, no matter where they are. Being up to date is the most important aspect, since there is no specific news carrier preference. News is consulted via a diverse selection of carriers such as a computer, mobile phone, radio or newspaper. The fact that they really like seeking for news, is also reflected in their weekend behaviour: all but one state that even more news is being consumed during the weekend, for example by browsing international websites (Informant-4, 18-34, M, 12-15y education, capital city), taking all morning to read the newspaper's weekend edition (Informant-6) or buying a second, loose newspaper (Informant-17, 35-60, F, -12y education, major city).

Informant-6 (35-60, M, 12-15y education, rural): We have a newspaper subscription and mostly browse through the newspaper in-between other things at night; but in the weekend, the newspaper is more like a weekend-thing, like during breakfast or brunch. But during weekdays we mostly read the newspaper at night on our computer.

Another characteristic of this repertoire is their critical attitude towards news media. They have the habit of comparing different news outlets. Informant-17 (35-60, F, -12y education, major city) blames news media for simply copy-pasting news items they receive from Belga, the national press agency. As a result, she says, all legacy media cover the same items.

Informant-17 (35-60, F, -12y education, major city): When you read *De Standaard*, *De Morgen* and *De Gentenaar*, it is always the same, so I like to check other sectors as well so I can compare and approach media more critically.

Informant-4 (18-34, M, 12-15y education, capital city) is a huge fan of dewereldmorgen.be, an alternative website that aims to voice ideas that are less covered by the mainstream media. He calls it 'the ideal news medium; a platform that is more online oriented. And supported or financed by the reader'. Even though Informant-4 (18-34, M, 12-15y education, capital city) stresses the importance of the platform, he does not spend a lot of time on the website. Multiple times a week he visits dewereldmorgen.be, on which he spends about 15 minutes per visit. Others agree that it is 'our' duty, as world citizens, to stay updated about what is going on. For Informant-4 (18-34, M, 12-15y education, capital city) it is even more than that: to him, following the news is 'an essential part of being human'.

Informant-4 (18-34, M, 12-15y education, capital city): I find it important that people know what role they play in the world and what other people, somewhere else, go through. To me, it is an essential part of being human. Awareness. Just general awareness.

Three types of news content are mentioned as extra important: local/regional news, international news ('where history is being written' (Informant-17, 35-60, F, -12y education, major city)) and news that concerns their professional activities. While news is mainly being followed out of personal interest, three informants also experience pressure from their job or studies to stay updated. However, this pressure is not considered as a burden, since they have an intrinsic motivation to stay up-to-date.

R6: Sports lover

This repertoire is characterized by their passion for sports: they are fans and want to know the latest sport results immediately. They rely on various news outlets to stay updated: broadbloid newspapers, TV broadcasts, Text-TV and national news magazines online. All cluster members have the habit of checking Text-TV daily, which is valued for being quick and structured.

A second unique news media source is the national news magazines online. One informant (Informant-15, 18-34, M, -12y education, rural) checks the cycling news website *wielerrevue.nl* regularly, whereas Informant-3' (60+, F, 12-15y education, major city) gets updates from these websites via her husband. Next, the Sports lover has a subscription on *Het Nieuwsblad*, a national daily broadbloid newspaper, which is well-known for its sports section. Often, the sports pages of the newspaper are being read before the other (more general) news articles. Another news media type that is appreciated by Sports lovers, are PSB broadcasts, both TV and radio. The popularity of the PSB newscast can be explained by *Sporza*, the PSB sports brand. During a sports event, the radio is switched to *Radio 1/Sporza* (PSB channel), which broadcasts the event live. On TV, the PSB newscast is appreciated. To Informant-24, the 7 o'clock (extended) newscast is the most valuable news outlet. It combines a general overview of the news and includes a long overview of the sports updates. Also, PSB news is considered to be of higher quality or even 'more newsworthy' (Informant-15, 18-34, M, -12y education, rural) than commercial broadcasters.

Remarkably, the number one news outlet (news via Twitter) does not seem to be important to the cluster members. One informant (Informant-15, 18-34, M, -12y education, rural) states it is 'fun' to follow racing via *Sporza.be* (PSB news brand), but the other two have never used Twitter (this seeming contradiction is discussed in the Conclusion).

R7: Collateral user

This repertoire includes informants with an outspoken laid-back news use repertoire. News, which certainly does not play an important role in their lives, should be served and is expected to find them, rather than the other way around. Engaging with news is found to be

an effort. They mostly 'co-consume' news: when people around them (i.e. partner or parents) consume news, they will follow.

Informant-11 (35-64, F, 15+y education, rural): When the newscast is playing, I will watch it too. But I'm not a news freak, I won't turn on the TV myself to watch the newscast.

The fact that she uses the word 'news freak' for putting on the newscast shows the laid-backness of this profile. As a result, this repertoire is composed of atypical news outlets: the top three includes three media types that are unique to this repertoire: news distributed by online video sharing media (i.e. YouTube), free daily newspaper (i.e. *Metro*) and news via news aggregators or personalized news services (i.e. Google and Yahoo News). In addition, news shared by email or SMS and PSB newscasts are popular among the informants. The entire top five news outlets are free media, of which the free daily newspapers are valued the most. They all pick up free newspapers, mostly *Metro* (at the train or metro station) or *De Zondag* at the bakery.

This repertoire prefers internationally-oriented news. Especially Informant-22 (who has two nationalities: Belgian and Portuguese, 18-34, F, -12y education, capital city) has an outspoken interest for British media outlets: she listens to BBC1 radio, watches BBC news online and reads online articles of *The Economist*. The latter is appreciated due to its newsletter. Twice a week she receives news updates, which offer the headlines. Sometimes she will click on such a highlight and read the article.

I: Do you have a special reason why you specifically have a subscription [for The Economist]?

Informant-22 (18-34, F, -12y education, capital city): I found the articles interesting. And I noticed the articles who have been rated as the best are accessible without a paid subscription.

News shared by email is also important for Informant-35 (18-34, F, 15+y education, rural). She is a nurse and her colleagues have the habit of forwarding news items related to their work to each other.

Conclusion

In the expanding news ecosystem, news audiences tend to develop personal consumption patterns and compose individualised news repertoires (Yuan, 2011). However, even though these news media repertoires are personal, similar practices can be found among various users. Based on interviews with 36 news media users, the Q-sort technique and principal component analysis, this article was able to map seven news media repertoires in Flanders.

A first conclusion relates to the number of repertoires: seven repertoires is a rather high number (along with Portugal the second-highest within the 12-country international Q study, after Estonia with nine repertoires (see the article by Ragne Kouts in this Special Section). This shows that news use practices in Flanders are very diverse. The notion of a news media repertoire implies that news use is relational (Hasebrink & Domeyer, 2012): news use via one platform might influence if and how news is consumed via another platform. News media producers are thus challenged to build cross-media news distribution strategies, taking into account these different repertoires.

A second conclusion refers to the labelling of news repertoires. The seven repertoires have been defined using the concept of 'worthwhileness' (Schrøder, 2015) by profiling the informants on a diverse selection of characteristics. Audiences have different approaches to selecting 'worthwhile' news, including the preference towards background or trusted news (i.e. Quality-seeking traditionalist, Quality-seeking cosmopolitan and Critical omnivore), the platform preference (i.e. Digital Up-to-dater, Headline-based snacker), an outspoken news content preference (Sport fan), or even the lack of news use interest (i.e. Collateral user). In other words, defining the Flemish repertoires is a multi-faceted process, which includes the factor scores and the verbal reflections of the informants during the interview. From a methodological point of view, this also stresses the fact that the Q sort is a qualitative method. The main goal is to understand the diversity and grasp how audience members give meaning to news. By solely looking at the top ranked news media outlets, the repertoires cannot be defined.

Whereas the diversity of the repertoires is central in the study, some reflections can be made across these different repertoires. First, the study shows the symbiosis of traditional and digital news outlets within the current media-saturated environment. Six out of seven news media repertoires combine both offline and online news media, one is a traditional-only repertoire. Even though the impact of digitization cannot be overestimated within the production and distribution of information, one might ask if - on the level of news use - earlier fears for internet news (and especially news via social media) as a news source replacement are still unfounded. There is no doubt that news websites, mobiles and social media have gained an important role within news use practices, but traditional and legacy media still are dominant within the news media repertoires. News practices have always been hybrid (Hamilton, 2016) and still are.

Second, Flemings are found to be rather passive news users. News is being consumed because informants feel they should. The main motivators to consume news are civic duty or social connection (either professional or personal). Only one repertoire (i.e. the Critical omnivore) enjoys consuming news and finds it relaxing. Even more so, none of the informants actively participates with news, which might also temper aspirations towards an 'age of participatory news' (Deuze, Bruns, & Neuberger, 2007).

Third, a discrepancy can often be found between the top five ranked news outlets of the repertoires (i.e. the outlets with the highest factor scores) and the ones the informants talk about. In line with Swart et al. (2016) we can thus conclude that audiences' news

consumption does not completely overlap with the news outlets they value the most. The Sport fan repertoire for example values Twitter as a news source, but does not (yet?) actually use Twitter as a news source. A second example can be found within the Quality-seeking cosmopolitan: this repertoire values newscasts from international providers the most, whereas these outlets only take a small part of the actual news consumption. As such, we would like to argue that research on news use practices should be broader than mapping news consumption (frequency? time spent?) through a questionnaire. By contextualizing consumption patterns with the perceived value or importance of news outlets, both scholars and news producers gain a more nuanced insight into news use practices, reaching beyond evidencing numbers.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Sample description and demographics of the 36 Flemish informants

Informant	Gender	Age	Location	Education B	News repertoire
BF1	Female	35-60	Rural	Primary/secondary	1
BF2	Male	61+	Rural	Intermediate	1
BF3	Male	35-60	Rural	Primary/secondary	2
BF4	Male	18-34	Capital	Intermediate	5
BF5	Female	35-60	Rural	Intermediate	2
BF6	Female	35-60	Capital	Intermediate	5
BF7	Female	18-34	Rural	Primary/secondary	3
BF8	Female	61+	Rural	Primary/secondary	4
BF9	Female	35-60	Rural	Intermediate	3
BF10	Male	35-60	Rural	Higher	3
BF11	Female	35-60	Rural	Higher	7
BF12	Female	18-34	Capital	Primary/secondary	2
BF13	Male	35-60	Rural	Intermediate	5
BF14	Male	61+	Urbanized	Higher	1
BF15	Male	18-34	Rural	Primary/secondary	6
BF16	Female	61+	Capital	Intermediate	1
BF17	Female	35-60	Urbanized	Higher	5
BF18	Male	35-60	Rural	Higher	2
BF19	Female	61+	Urbanized	Intermediate	1
BF20	Male	18-34	Capital	Primary/secondary	3
BF21	Female	61+	Capital	Higher	2
BF22	Female	18-34	Capital	Primary/secondary	7
BF23	Male	18-34	Urbanized	Intermediate	4
BF24	Male	61+	Urbanized	Primary/secondary	6
BF25	Male	35-60	Capital	Higher	1
BF26	Male	18-34	Urbanized	Higher	4
BF27	Male	18-34	Urbanized	Higher	3
BF28	Male	35-60	Urbanized	Higher	2
BF29	Male	61+	Urbanized	Primary/secondary	4
BF30	Male	61+	Capital	Intermediate	1
BF31	Female	18-34	Urbanized	Higher	3
BF32	Male	61+	Urbanized	Primary/secondary	4
BF33	Female	61+	Urbanized	Primary/secondary	4
BF34	Female	61+	Capital	Intermediate	6
BF35	Female	18-34	Capital	Higher	7
BF36	Female	18-34	Capital	Intermediate	3

Appendix 2: 36 item Q concourse of news media types with categorization

Q-card	News outlet	Platform
1. Watched national TV news bulletin on a public service channel	Broadcaster	Traditional
2. Watched national TV news bulletin on a commercial channel	Broadcaster	Traditional
3. Watched regional/local TV news bulletin	Broadcaster	Traditional
4. Watched TV current affairs, light	Broadcaster	Traditional
5. Watched TV current affairs, serious	Broadcaster	Traditional
6. Watched TV news/current affairs on national 24-hour TV news channel	Broadcaster	Traditional
7. Watched TV news and/or current affairs from international providers	Broadcaster	Traditional
8. Read news on Text-TV	Broadcaster	Traditional
9. Radio news as part of a general public service radio channel	Broadcaster	Traditional
10. Radio news as part of a general commercial radio channel	Broadcaster	Traditional
11. Radio current affairs (general radio channel and/or 24 hour radio news)	Broadcaster	Traditional
12. National daily up-market newspaper, print	Print	Traditional
13. National daily tabloid newspaper, print	Print	Traditional
14. Free daily newspaper, print	Print	Traditional
15. National news magazines or weekly up-market newspaper, print	Print	Traditional
16. Local/regional daily newspaper, print	Print	Traditional
17. Local weekly/bi-weekly/monthly newspaper, print	Print	Traditional
19. National tabloid newspaper online	Print	Digital
20. Free daily newspaper online	Print	Digital
21. National news magazines or weekly up-market newspaper, online	Print	Digital
22. Local/regional daily newspaper online	Print	Digital
23. Local weekly/bi-weekly/monthly, online	Print	Digital
24. Read national broadcaster's online news	Broadcaster	Digital
25. Read local/regional broadcaster's online news	Broadcaster	Digital
26. Read international broadcaster's online news	Broadcaster	Digital
27. News on Facebook	Social media	Digital
28. News on Twitter	Social media	Digital
29. News on other social media	Social media	Digital
30. News distributed by online video sharing media	Social media	Digital
31. Blogs with news	Social media	Digital
32. News shared by email or SMS	Various	Digital
33. Professional magazines	Print	Traditional
34. News via news aggregators or personalized news services	Various	Digital
35. News from born-online news media	Various	Digital
36. National, regional or international news sites online, not provided by media	Various	Digital

Appendix 3: Rotated component matrix, summarizing the significant component loadings

	R1 QUALITY- SEEKING TRADITIONALIST	R2 QUALITY- SEEKING COSMOPOLITAN	R3 DIGITAL UP-TO- DATER	R4 HEADLINE- BASED SNACKER	R5 CRITICAL OMNIVORE	R6 SPORT FAN	R7 COLLATERAL USER
BF16	0.789						
BF2	0.780						
BF1	0.747						
BF19	0.739						
BF30	0.629						
BF14	0.609	0.521					
BF25	0.602						
BF12		0.755					
BF3		0.703					
BF28	0.472	0.678					
BF5		0.677					
BF18		0.622	0.506				
BF21	0.470	0.595					
BF20			0.822				
BF27			0.739				
BF9			0.658				
BF10		0.537	0.638				
BF7			0.609				0.452
BF36			0.498				
BF31			0.463				
BF32				0.746			
BF26				0.693			
BF33				0.605			
BF29	0.528			0.546			
BF23	0.450			0.514			
BF8			0.491	0.493			
BF17					0.784		
BF4					0.693		
BF13				0.491	0.569		
BF6					0.534		
BF34						0.702	
BF15						0.674	
BF24						0.596	
BF22							0.776
BF11							0.565
BF35							0.524

Note:

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