

**Disruptive
Dynamics**

Gen Z: the new voice in the editor's room

**In today's multi-faceted world with emerging
forms of content, is the written word enough
to keep Gen Z engaged?**



As Gen Z Takes the Throne, Is Content Still King?

Content has seen rapid change over the past decade, driven in large part by Gen Z's social-first mindset and appetite for multi-faceted content. In response, publishers are looking for new ways to scale production and keep up with reader demands.

As a new generation of consumers ascend and the definition of content evolves, how can publishers keep up? Will original editorial content be enough, or will publishers need to adapt and develop new ways to engage?

In this paper, we'll explore Gen Z's appetite for newer media channels and engagement tools, what they're looking for from today's publisher, and interest in future formats.

Connatix polled over 1,000 U.S. consumers across generations to understand how they engage with new mediums, and what will motivate them to spend more time with publisher content in the future.





How Is Gen Z Consuming the News?

Websites are still the “go-to” for news

It may seem Gen Z is all about social media, but almost half regularly turn to traditional websites to get their news. This is on par with older generations.

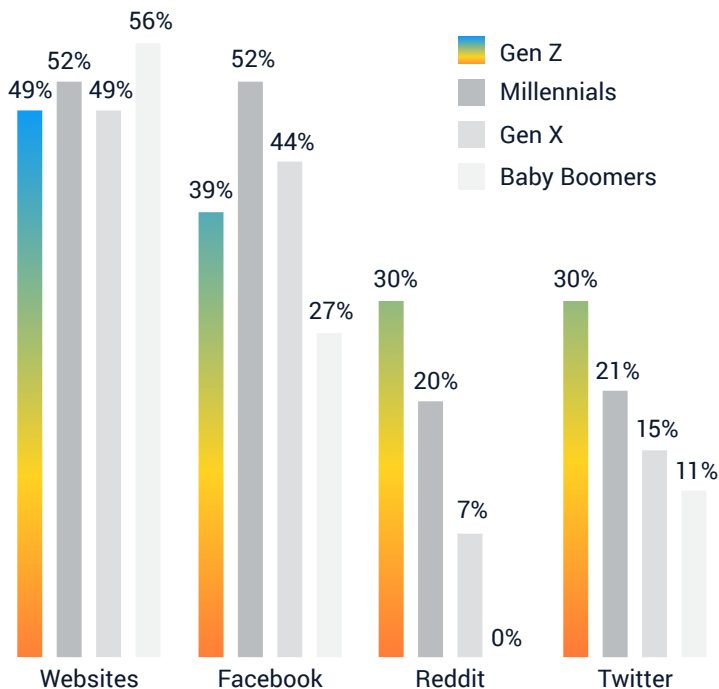
Interestingly, Gen Z is also prone to spend *more time* reading articles online, with 73% spending more than an hour every day reading the news, and 29% spending more than two hours. Compare this to Millennials who polled 67% and 25% respectively.

Reddit becoming a trusted news source

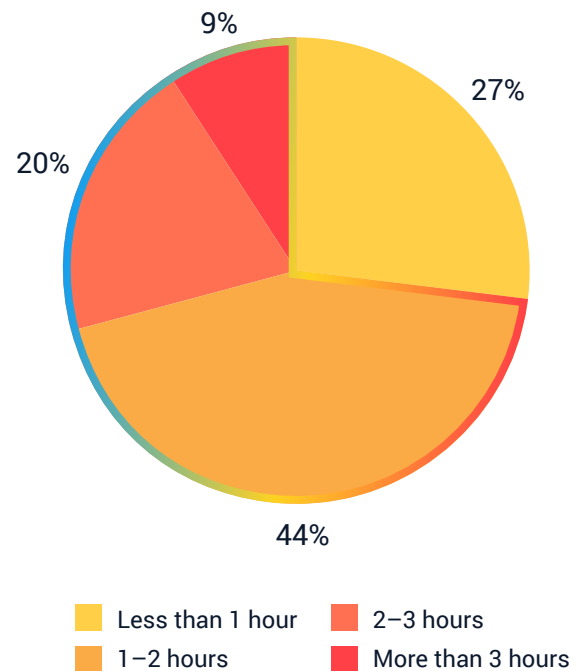
While Gen Zers still get their daily dose of publisher news, they are rapidly turning towards towards social channels like Reddit and Twitter (30%). Facebook, on the other hand, saw a dip in popularity with the younger generation.

Not only does this hint at a shift towards user-sourced content, it also suggest Gen Z is willing to trade off glossy designs and layouts for convenience and quick access to content.

How do you typically access the news online?
(Select all that apply)



Gen Z time spent reading articles online



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For Gen Z, media consumption is about having more of everything to maximize a piece of content. They want more video, more audio, and more feedback loops integrated into their content. They have a high regard for curation and recommendations, and will use these features in concert with social media and UGC as a North Star for the stories they ultimately delve into more deeply on publishers' sites.

– David Kashak, CEO, Connatix

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The 'More of Everything' Mindset

When asked what would prompt them to spend more time with a publisher, Gen Z cited a mix of media formats like audio and video.

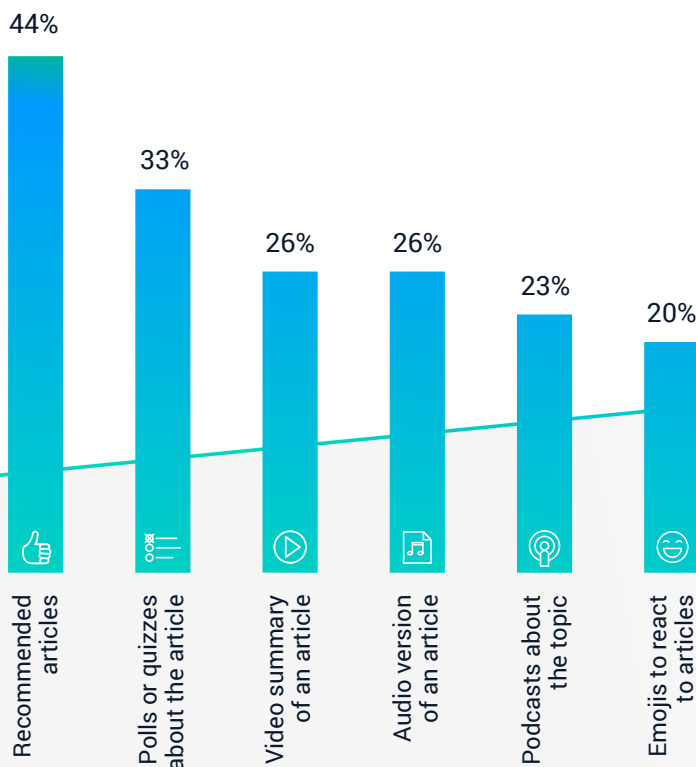
This generation is looking for more of everything from publishers, but in consumable and convenient formats. Take video, for example. While over 55% of readers under 35 spend more time with publishers who offer video, a quarter of Gen Z also wants to see video summaries of articles. Media extension is important, but so is curation.

Extending the life of a story

A common content marketing strategy, extending a story's 'shelf-life' has taken on new meaning under the wings of social media. Gen Z has grown accustomed to accessing related content quickly - through a simple click on a hashtag, or scroll through reader commentary.

Gen Z highly values recommended content from content creators and ways to immerse further with stories. When asked what would prompt them to engage more with publishers, they said recommended articles (44%), polls or quizzes (33%), and video / audio summaries (26%).

What would prompt you to spend more time with articles online? (Gen Z Responses)



55%

of readers under 35 would spend more time with publishers if there were videos to watch

44%

of Gen Z wants to see more recommended articles from publishers

Creating a dialogue with stories

The surge of user generated content has led to a time where peer opinions are highly valued. What's more, young consumers desire a platform for influence, and a way to broadcast their thoughts publicly.

While all generations are likely to leave comments on social platforms, Gen Z is far more likely to comment directly on a publisher's website when given the option. Not only does this generation want to read content from other users, they want to have a voice in the conversation.

In addition to commenting, young readers are also looking for social features from publishers. When asked which new features they would like to see, a third said reader polls.

Interestingly, 'sharing features' were only of interest to 13% of Gen Z readers. Instead, they are looking to publishers to offer ways for them to react to content, and to gauge other readers' reactions with polls, commentary, and emoji reactions.

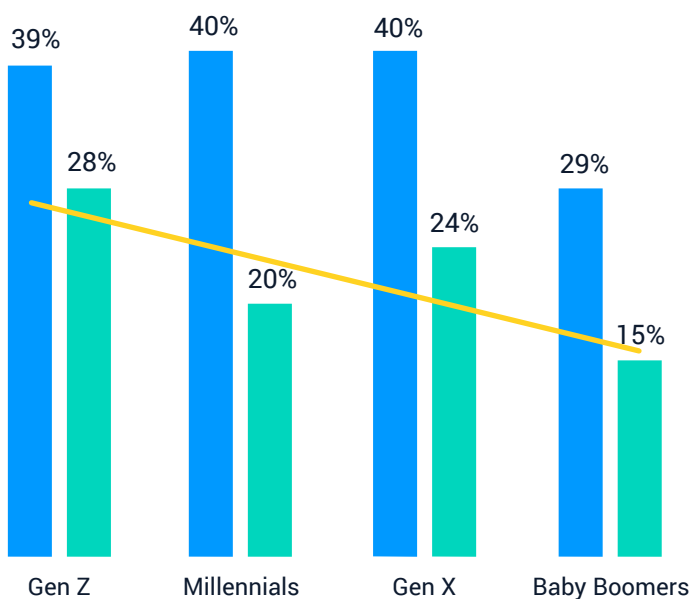
61%

of Gen Z shares or reacts to articles on social media

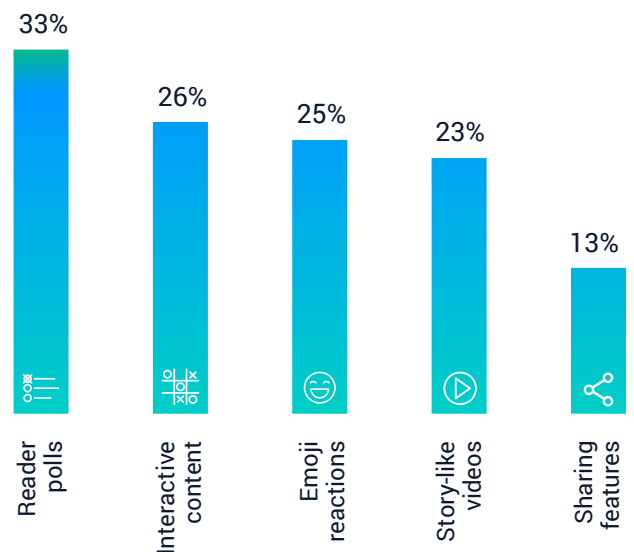
40%



of readers under 35 regularly comment on articles and videos online

How do you typically interact with content (i.e. articles and videos) online?



Which social features would you like to see offered more on a publisher's website? (Gen Z respondents)



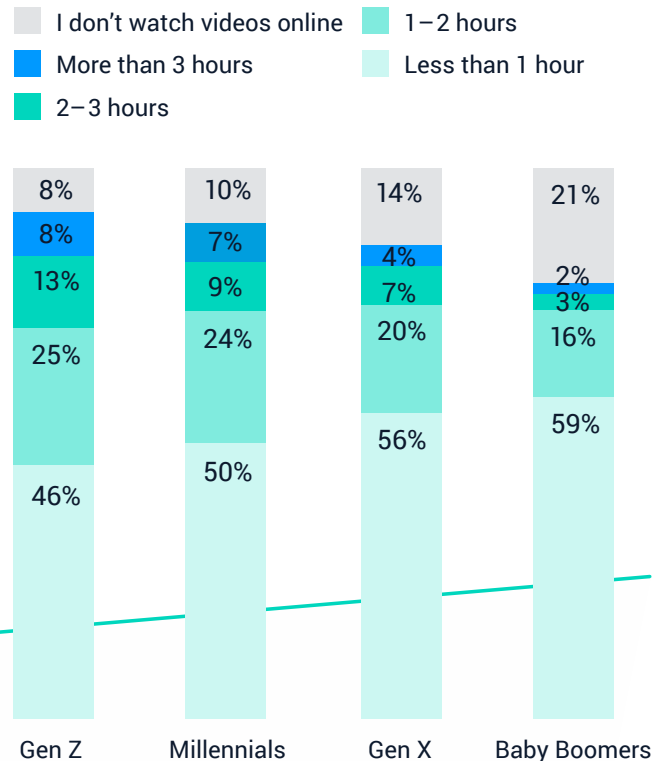
 I comment on social media
 I leave a comment on the website

Video is Still Sticky

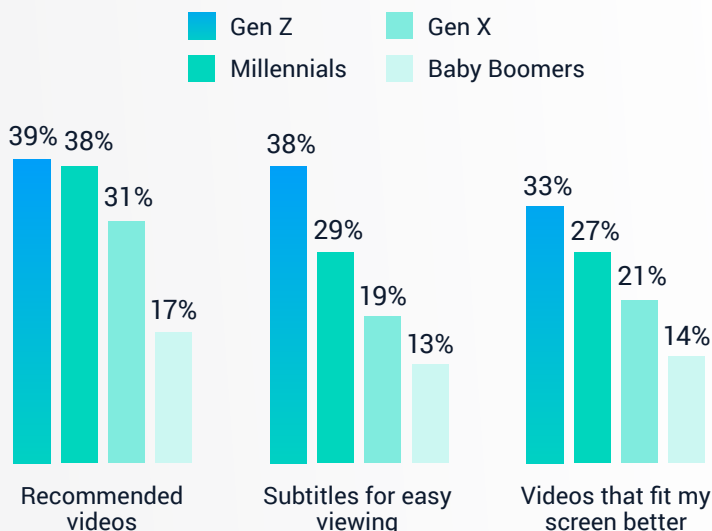
On average, Gen Z is watching more publisher videos online than any other generation. More than 46% of those polled watch over 1 hour a day. Compare that to 40% of Millennials, and 31% of Gen X.

Still, there is a lot publishers can do to get Gen Z to engage more with video on their site – particularly when it comes to mobile engagement. When asked what would get them to watch more publisher video on their phones, they cited recommended videos (39%), subtitles (38%), and videos that fit their screens (33%). This shouldn't come as a surprise considering nearly 60% will flip their phone horizontally to watch a 1 minute video.

How many hours a day do you spend watching publisher videos online?



When visiting a publisher's website on your phone, what would prompt you to watch more videos?



57%

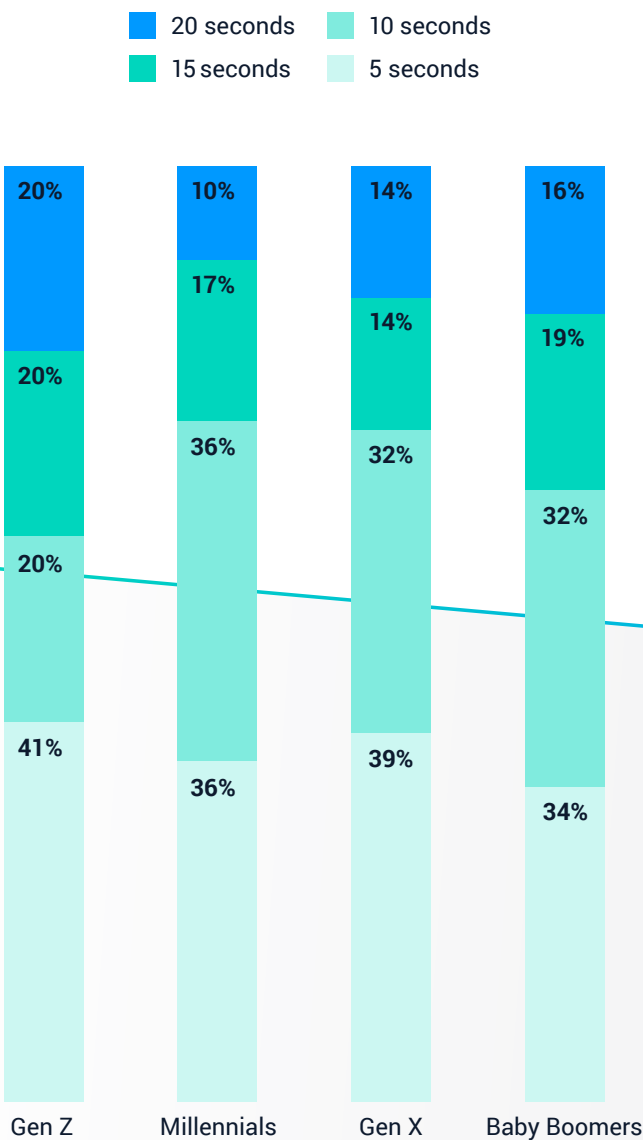
of Gen Z will turn their phone horizontally when watching a 1 minute or longer video on their phone.

Social, Humorous Video Ads Are Key

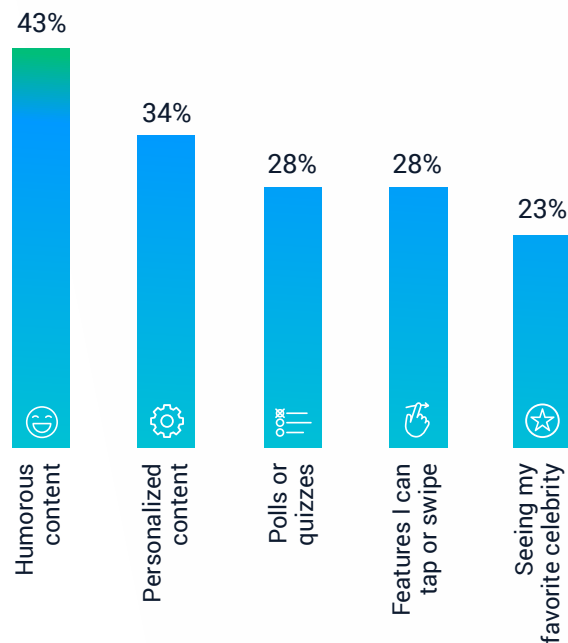
According to eMarketer, U.S. digital video ad spending will reach \$58B in 2023. This is not surprising, considering nearly **60% of Gen Z said they were willing to watch a video ad before a video**. However, they want it to be on their terms.

When it comes to video ads, young readers are looking for a mix of humorous content (43%), personalization (34%), and social features like polls or quizzes (28%). In addition, shorter isn't always better. The 'six second ad' has grown in popularity with advertisers over the past few years, however Gen Z is twice as willing as Millennials to watch longer form video ads (>20 seconds).

What is the maximum time you are willing to spend watching an ad before a video?



What would prompt you to engage more with an advertisement at the beginning of a video? (Gen Z)



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Gen Z may actually be more accepting of video ads because they mimic the large volumes of short-form content they already consume. When the ads are humorous, relevant, and engaging, the feeling that it is averting the viewer may not be as strong as it can be with other, longer forms of content.

– Jenn Chen, CRO, Connatix

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Audio Scores High With Gen Z

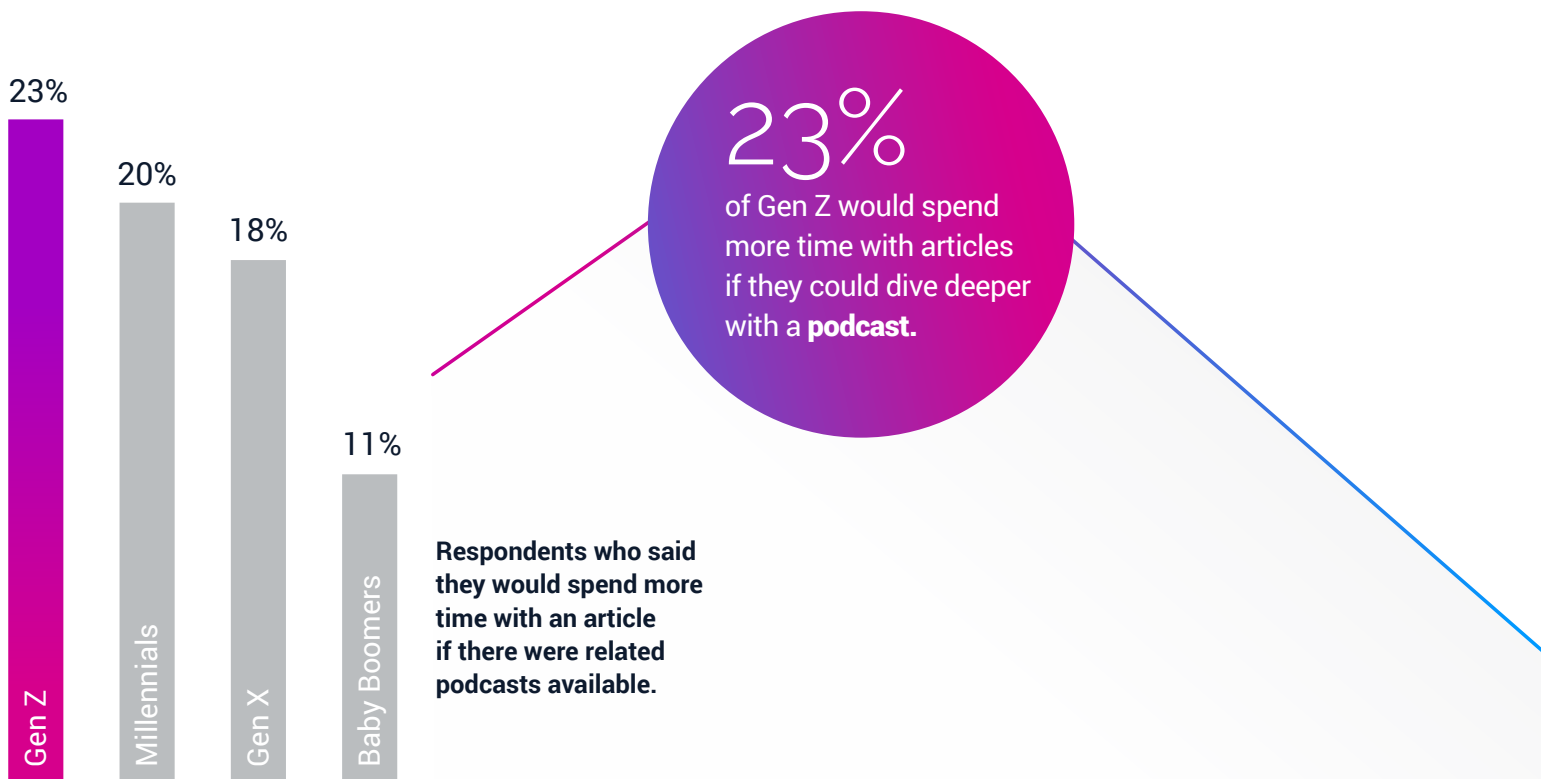
Radio has been around for almost a century, but audio is making a come-back. In 2019, Apple reported its podcasts topped 50 billion all-time downloads and streams, and digital audiobook revenues continue to rise. The potential for this to reshape publishing is immense. Immersive storytelling can be done without the aid of pictures, videos, or text.

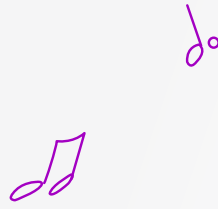
Tuning in to the on-demand lifestyle

In the age of Amazon Prime, Netflix, and Uber, consumers have grown accustomed to an on-demand lifestyle. We can get a package within hours, a car ride within minutes, and watch a movie within seconds.

We want what we want, quickly and seamlessly. Audio taps into this mindset, and offers readers instant access to content when they're on-the-go or multitasking. They can listen to a podcast or audiobook on their commute, while doing the laundry, or at work.

Today, younger readers desire a multi-faceted experience from publishers that extends to audio. Nearly a quarter said they would like to see related podcasts while reading an article so they can dive deeper.





Beyond the podcast

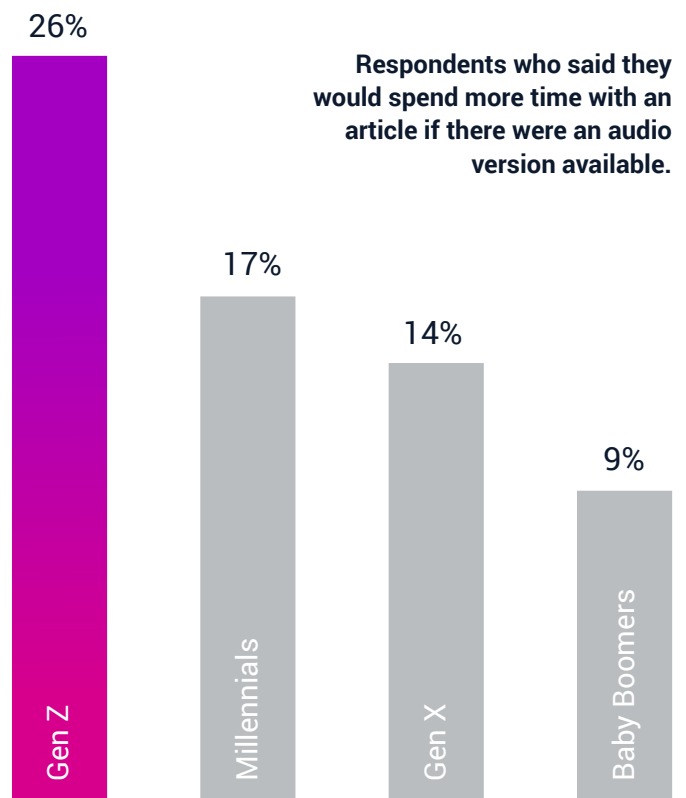
A quarter of Gen Zers would spend more time with an article if there were an audio version available.

Keep readers on the page and engaged

For Gen Z, the buck doesn't stop at podcasts. In addition to original audio material, younger readers also cited an interest in seeing audio articles from publishers (26% of Gen Z compared to 17% of Millennials). For readers who are interested in news or politics specifically, this number is even higher at 30% across generations.

For this group, a glossy design and high impact visuals don't always trump convenience. This speaks directly to the on-the-go nature of today's reader, and desire for easy access to content.

Publishers looking to reach young readers might consider a two-pronged approach when it comes to audio; original content designed to work in tandem with current stories, and short form no-fuss audio articles that offer the convenience they desire.



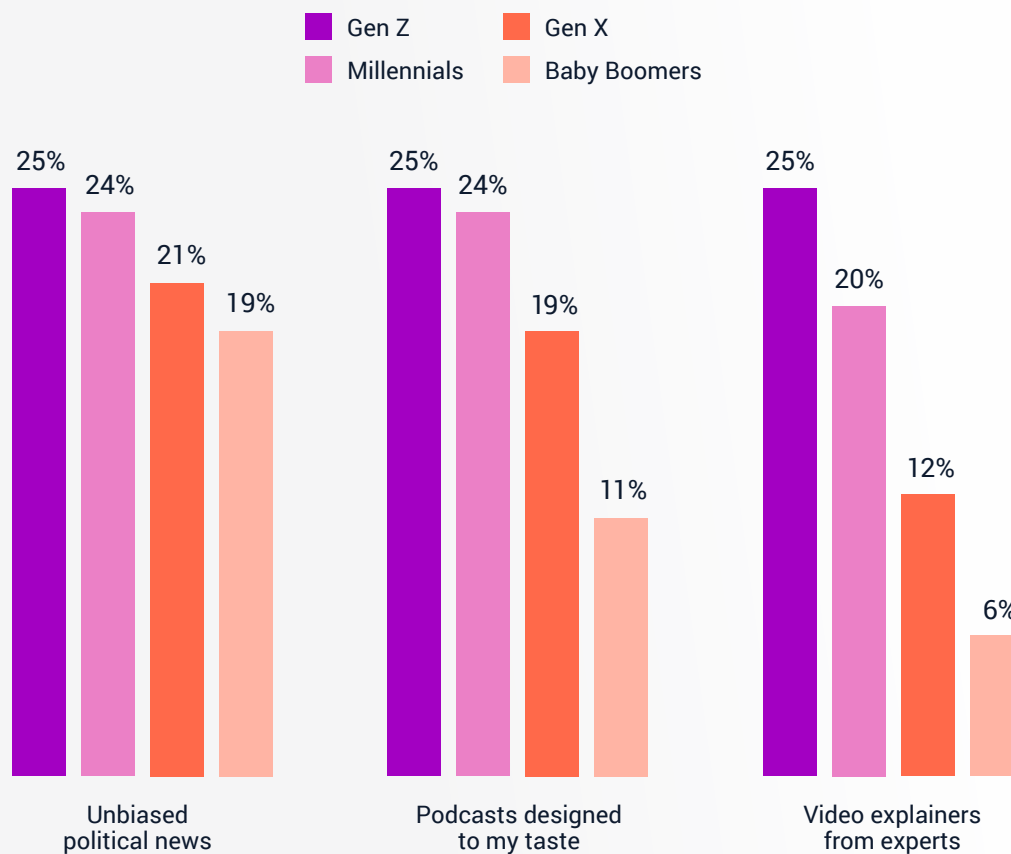
Respondents who said they would spend more time with an article if there were an audio version available.

Willing To Open Wallets for Premium Content

Readers have been slow to warm to publisher subscription models, but Gen Z expressed more interest than other generations in paying for content that met their experiential needs. A quarter of respondents said they were willing to pay \$10 a year for features like personalized podcasts, expert videos, and unbiased news.

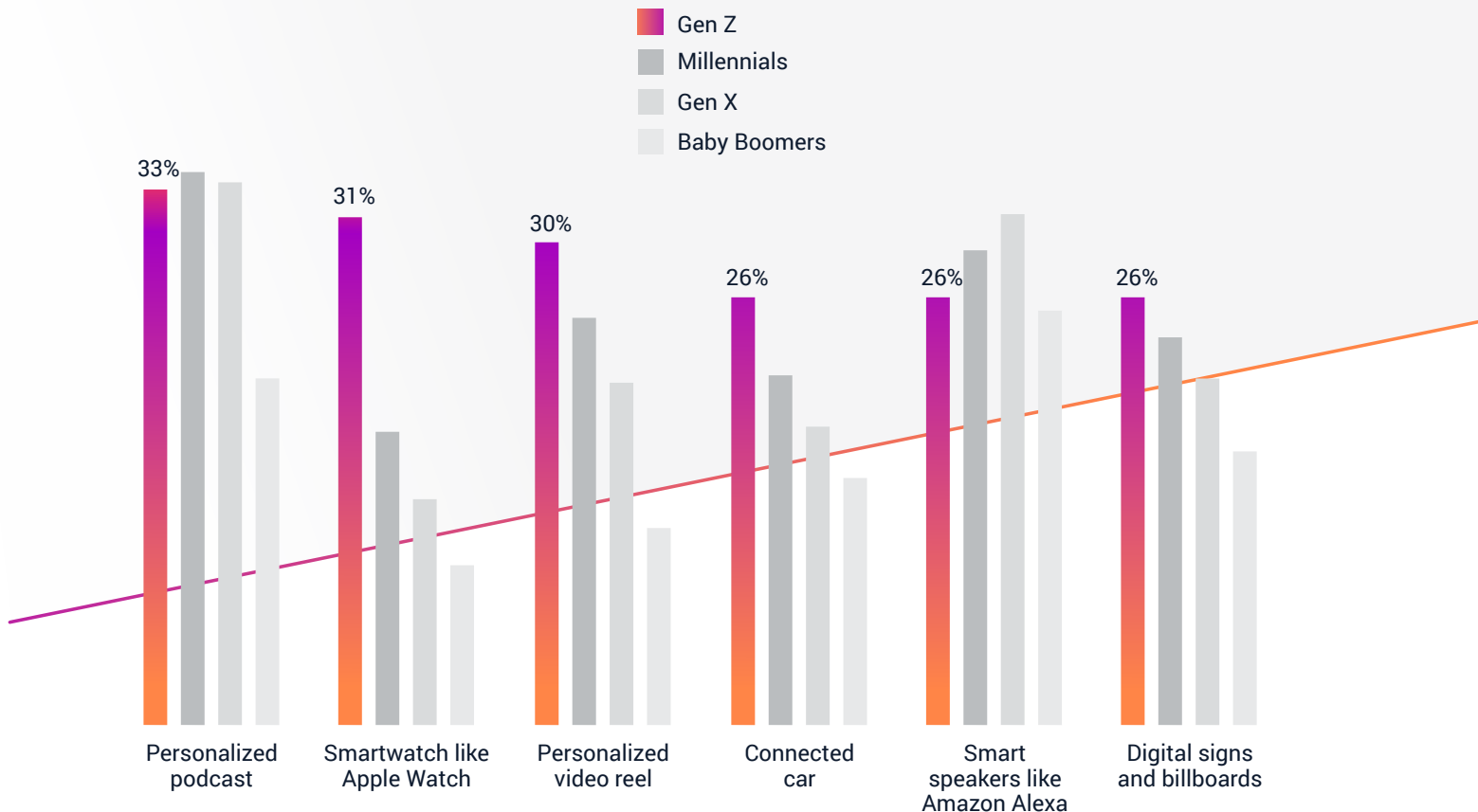
Whether publishers are looking for new potential drivers of revenue or ways to amplify their editorial value, premium features such as relevant audio and helpful video content will keep Gen Z coming back for more.

What would you pay \$10 a year for?



An eye toward the future

Which of these non-traditional formats would you be interested in using to receive news?



Social media has completely transformed the way young readers consume news, and now a world of emerging formats are poised to bring additional change. These changes may directly impact the way publishers choose to produce and deliver content to future generations of readers.

While all groups cited smart speakers and podcasts as a format of interest for news consumption, Gen Z was more likely than other generations to say smartwatches

(31%), personalized video reels (30%), and connected cars (26%). The desire for convenient, relevant content that fits seamlessly into their lives continues to be an important factor for Gen Z.

We may be a few years out from the promise of connected car technology, but now is the time for publishers to keep an eye toward the future and consider the impact emerging formats will have on the written word.

Tips to Give Gen Z 'More of Everything'

Young readers desire a multi-faceted content experience; diverse media formats, feedback loops, bite-sized content, and tools to interact. How can publishers quickly amplify their storytelling strategies?

1/ Think story extension

Gen Z wants easy access to relevant content, and the opportunity to continue engaging with a story across the media mix. Whether it's related podcasts, video summaries, or recommended articles, publishers should consider how they can extend premium editorial stories with related content to keep readers active and engaged.

2/ Create a dialogue

Readers now expect to be part of the conversation, and crave a platform for influence. Consider editorial tools and enhancements that will turn your story into a two-way conversation with readers. Controlled, brand-safe content enhancements are possible and available for publishers to implement across media formats, including polls and quizzes, interactive features, and emoji reactions.

3/ Optimize for mobile

More than any other group, Gen Z values experiences that fit their screen. In particular, they cited a desire for video content that is optimized for mobile. While vertical video production can be costly, it's important for publishers to consider how to best optimize their pages for mobile. New technologies are now available to help automate this process, and reduce costs.

4/ Offer easy, on-demand formats

With multiple media platforms and content 'noise' today, Gen Z values sorted, convenient content - even if this means trading off a premier editorial experience. Providing a mix of media formats for readers to easily consume a story on-demand (think audio articles or video summaries) and valuable recommended content will ensure Gen Z stays engaged and on the page.

5/ Consider future formats

Social media completely transformed content consumption habits over the past decade, and connected technology is poised to do the same. Now is the time to craft a long term vision for editorial content distribution across connected devices, and to consider how emerging formats will impact generational content preferences.

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About the research

Data for *Disruptive Dynamics: The new voice in the editor's room* was collected by Connatix through AYTM - Ask Your Target Market online research platform from 7/24/2019 - 7/30/2019 among 1,000 consumers above the age of 18 and at every socio-economic level in the US only.

AYTM is an independent online research firm that has a 25M Panel network globally.

