



IF IT CATCHES MY EYE

An Exploration of Online News Experiences of Teenagers

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MMC Teen Experience Research

- Sample: 65 Teens 14-18 who get some news online
 - Hour-long interviews with 48 teens
 - Focus groups with 17 teens
 - Written survey of both groups
- We studied:
 - How teens are (or aren't) engaged with news online
 - What draws them in
 - What language they use to describe thoughts, feelings, motivations
- Why? To learn how to increase teen news readership online

One thing we noticed....





When they think of news online, you're not tops on their lists

Favorite place for news

- Almost half picked generic portals: Comcast, AOL, Google, Yahoo...
- Only a handful picked a local Web site



News isn't at the top either

We often heard...

"I won't go out of my way to get news

BUT

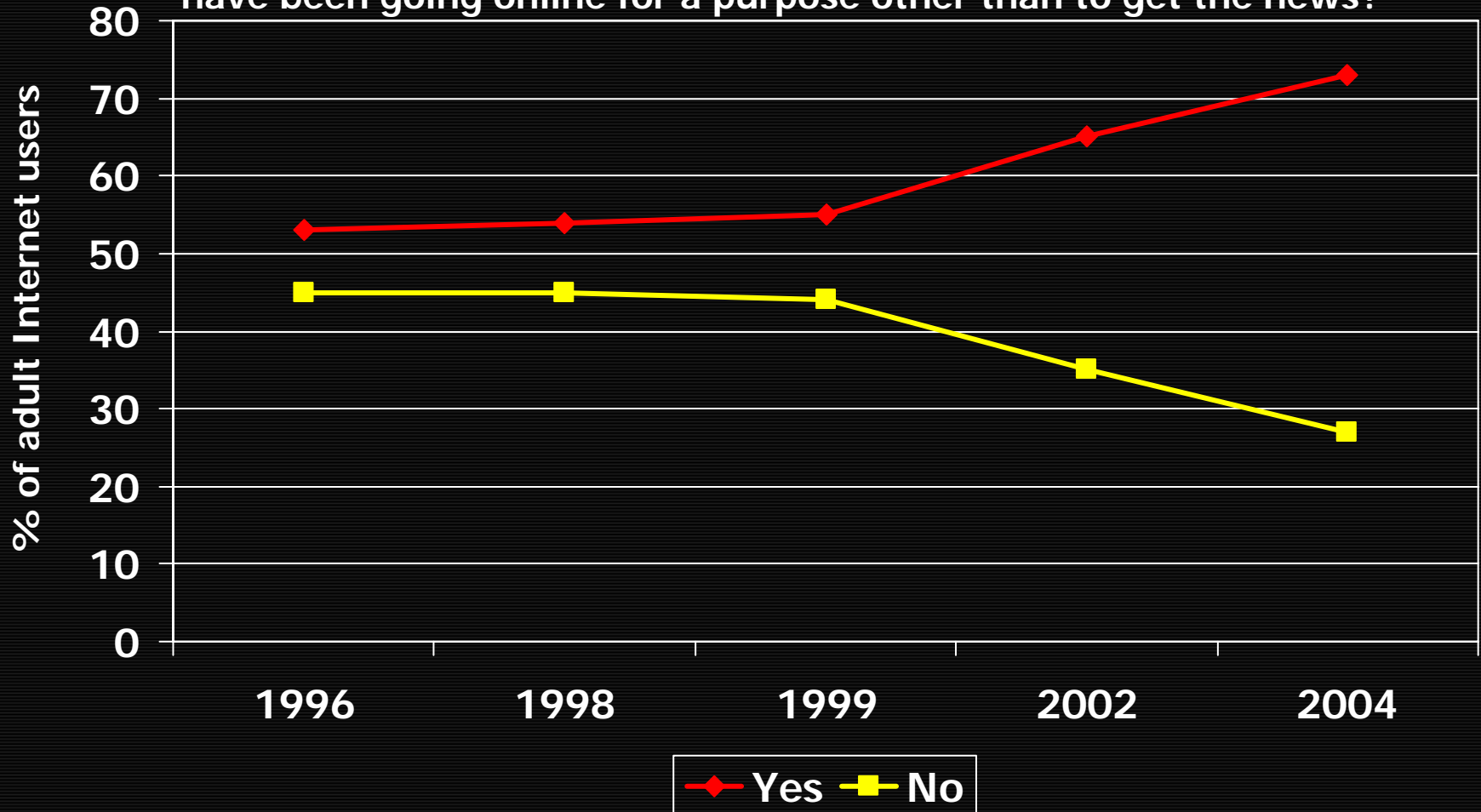
If something catches my eye, I'll click on it"

If it catches my eye...



Bumping into news online

Q: When you go online, do you ever come across news when you may have been going online for a purpose other than to get the news?



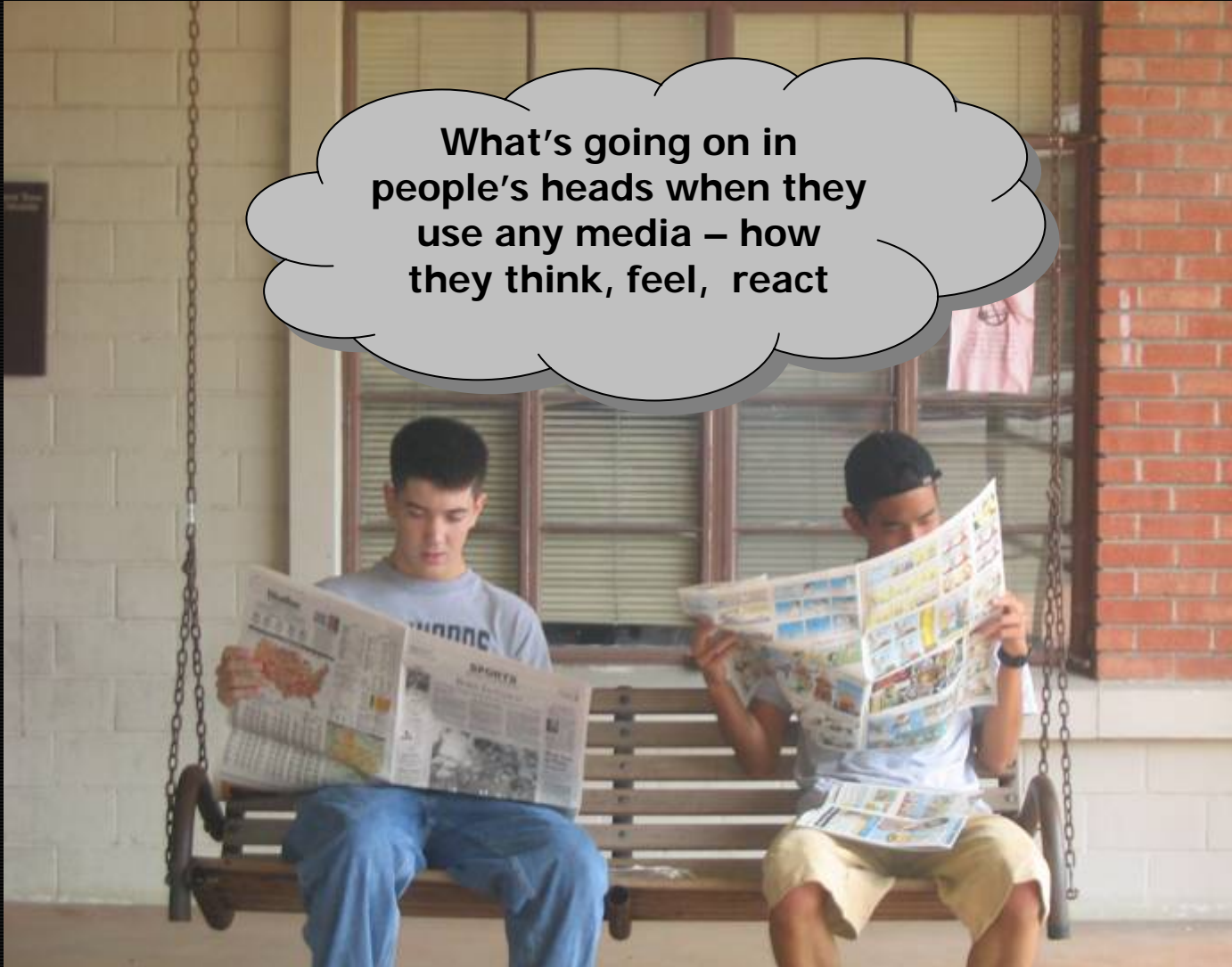


What often catches their eye

- Music
- Sports
- Celebrities
- Pictures
- Videos
- Topics of specific interest (science, anarchy, a favorite band...)
- Humor
 - Funny stories
 - Odd stories
 - Offbeat stories
 - News of the weird
 - Humor about the news and people in it

Study experience, then enhance it

What's going on in people's heads when they use any media – how they think, feel, react





Their favorite news sites...

- Are easy to use
- Give them information they can trust
- Give them something to talk about with friends and family



They are NOT places for...

- An enjoyable time-out
- Socializing
- Escaping from concerns
- Getting turned on or off by ads
- Personal involvement
- Contributing to the conversation
- Solving problems
- Feeling connected to their communities or neighbors

Experience: Easy to Use

This is easy to use.



For teens, easy to use means...

- Automatic
“Things just pop up...All I have to do is click and read”
- Comprehensive
Variety of subjects and functions
“Everything is there...No need to go anywhere else”
- Quick
Instant answers, short articles, not much work
- A great gateway
Can go anywhere they want from here, good search
- Facilitates multi-tasking
Can look at news while IMing or listening to music or doing homework or MySpace
- Clear
Organization makes intuitive sense

Experience: My Personal Time Out

This is a treat for me.

This is where I go to forget about everything else.





News sites are not a treat*

because news itself is not a treat

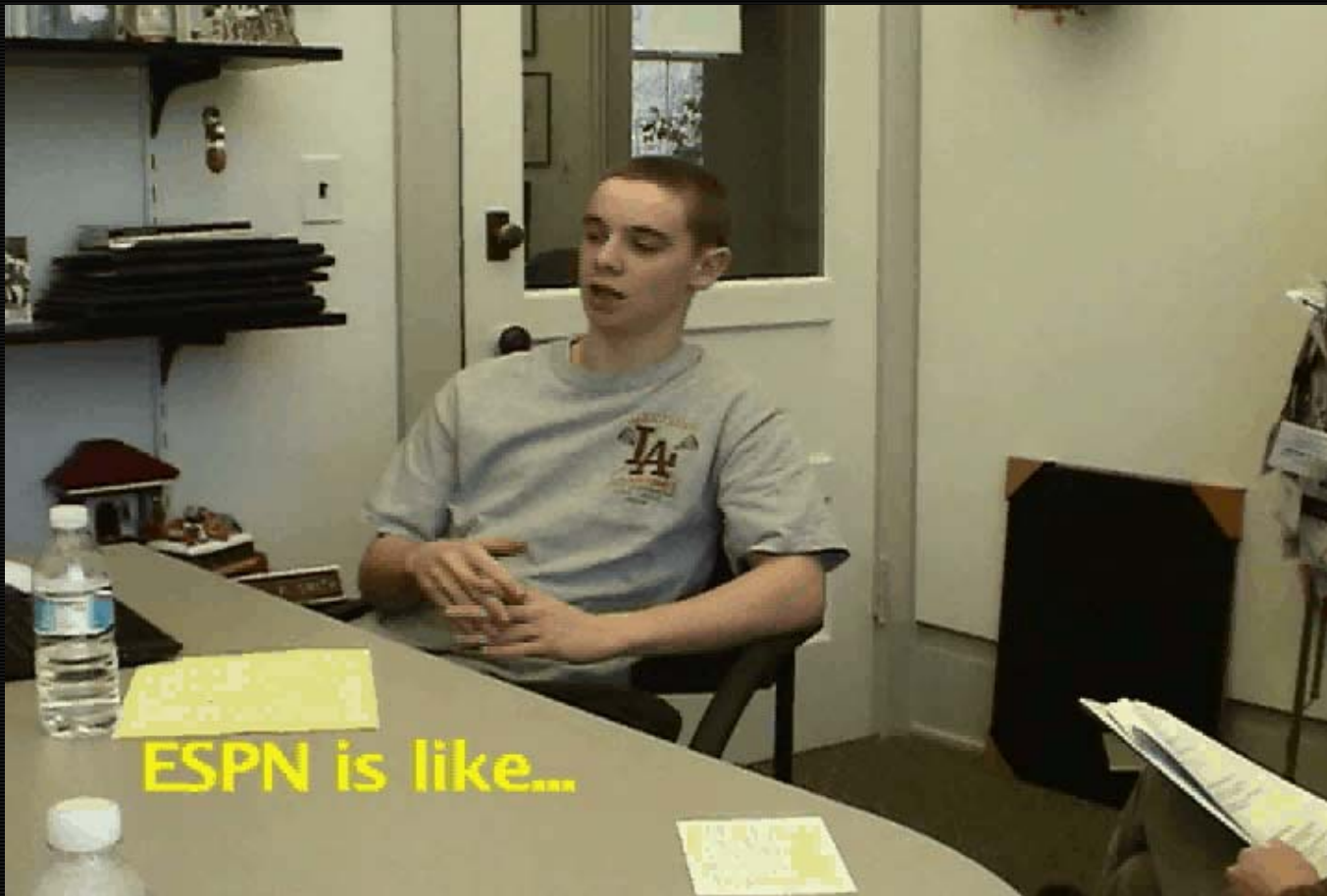
- It reminds them of the world's problems
- It makes them feel unsafe
- It makes them think, which isn't relaxing
- It stresses them out

*(Except for a few)

Experience: Credible Safe Place

This makes me feel safe.

This gives me information I can trust.





Experience: Credible Safe Place

- Size
- Brand
- Recommendations
- Checks out
- Fact, not opinion
- Easy to tell ads from editorial

Something to talk about...

I want to tell someone else about this site.

This often gives me things to talk about with my friends or family.



A vertical column of four colored squares: grey, green, purple, and grey.


Experience: Something To Talk About

- With friends
- For school
- With adults
- Part of who they're becoming
- Obligation



So what?

- Can local newspaper sites even hope to compete for their attention?
- If so, how?
- Are there opportunities to seize now?
- Think about it. Hard.



A teen audience aggregation strategy

- Make “catches my eye” the center of a new teen audience aggregation strategy. Let it shape:
 - Content
 - Presentation
 - Marketing

A teen audience aggregation strategy (cont.)

- Go wherever their eyes are, catch them and bring them home to you
- Trump the aggregators and offer teen local to the max
- Partner with the schools
- Reward teens who like being in the know
- Diminish their angst



Watch for the full report...

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