April 2024

Trust Drivers

A study by Schibsted Media

NOA Consulting Schibsted

Need for a user-validated definition of media trust

This study has been carried out by Schibsted with support from NoA Consulting with the goal of developing a user-validated definition of media trust that is relevant in today's digital information society.

The report is based on a large systematic survey study with media users in Sweden and Norway with the purpose of obtaining a valid, nuanced, and operationalisable definition of trust and its drivers, for media as a category.

The study was conducted after various types of insights (including academic research, internal and external expert interviews, and focus groups) had been gathered in a pre-study at Schibsted.

About the study

This study is based on web survey interviews with 3 000 users in Sweden and Norway

Data collection method	Web survey in Norstat's panel
Time period	17 November – 1 December 2023
Sample	3 000 interviews with individuals aged 16-74 years, representative of the population* * In Sweden, individuals born outside Europe somewhat underrepresented (7% in sample, 15% in population)
Category definition	This survey is about different types of media that explain, monitor, scrutinise and report on what is happening in society and around the world. For example, content that… … keeps you up to date with what is happening in society … explains what happens in society and why it happens … tells interesting stories about what is happening in society … scrutinises the behaviour of those in power (e.g. in politics, authorities, business) … reports what interesting people think, feel and do … is useful for everyday life and making important decisions

Analysis groups

Main analysis: Total sample (All aged 16-74 y)
3 000 respondents

Sweden
1 500 respondents (50%)

Norway
1 500 respondents (50%)

Break-down analyses:

Gender	
Men	51%
Women	49%

Education	
Low (Lower/upper secondary school)	54%
High (University/college)	43%

Age	
16-24	15%
25-34	18%
35-49	29%
50-74	38%

Consumption of edited media	
Regular (Daily/weekly use)	67%
Non-regular (Less than weekly)	33%

Our analysis model and key questions to answer to find a user-validated definition of media trust

Perceived media attributes related to trust

E.g., perceptions related to providing true fact-based information, having an accountable editor and not being driven by commercial interests.

→

Media trust

I.e., whether users trust information from a specific media or not.

→

Desired effects of media trust

- Usage of editorial media
- Willingness to pay for editorial media

Q2: What perceived media attributes drive trust?

Ensuring an actionable trust definition that can guide our work going forward.

Q1: Does media trust matter for influencing desired user behaviours?

Validating that trust "matters" for users and is relevant for the media's strategic ambitions

We identify drivers of trust in the category by asking questions about specific media brands

Main purpose: category-level conclusion

Statistical analysis of all brands together reveals drivers of trust for the category as a whole.

Brand-level questions to arrive at category-level conclusions

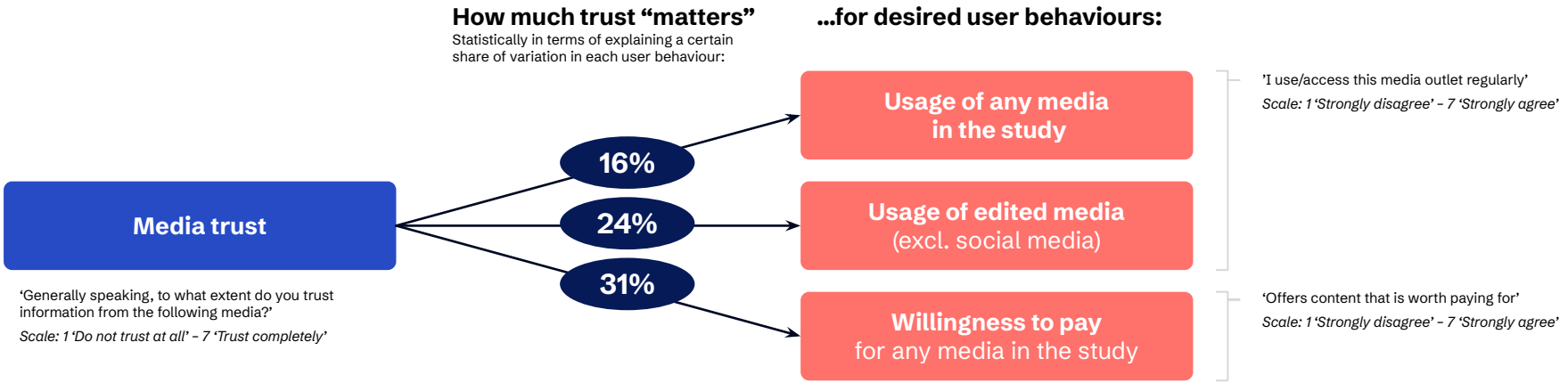
Respondents asked trust-related questions about specific media brands.

- The **purpose of this study is to understand what drives trust at the category level**, i.e., for the entire information landscape that the brands included represent.
- The **questions** to users have, however, been **asked at brand level.** Which evokes more nuanced answers (compared to questions about “media” or “news media” as a whole).
- The brand-level answers have then been **analysed at an aggregated level.**
- **Specific brand perceptions are not presented in the report** as the sample is specifically intended for category-level analysis.

Results | Question 1: Does media trust matter for influencing desired user behaviours?

Trust partly matters – greatest impact on usage of edited media and willingness to pay for content

Media brand trust has a significant and positive impact on all three user behaviours, which means trust does matter. However, the fact that trust explains only 16-31% of the behaviours means that other aspects matter more* – trust is not enough on its own.



* See page 23.

Results | Question 2: What perceived media attributes drive trust?

True drivers derived through statistical analyses – direct questions should be avoided

Direct questions – people partly “lie”
Rationalised answers influenced by social-desirability bias

Statistical analysis finds “true” drivers
By correlating and finding links between different attitudes expressed

Users in Sweden and Norway have very similar thoughts on trust – attributes driving media trust are 94% the same

94% similarity
(across all 49 drivers, only top 10 shown below)

Sweden – Top 10 drivers of trust	Norway – Top 10 drivers of trust
1. Credible individuals	1. Accountable editor
2. Fact-based, true	**2. Fact-based, true**
3. Thorough research	**3. Credible individuals**
4. Objective, factual	**4. Objective, factual**
5. Follows journalistic principles	**5. Thorough research**
6. Conveys most important information	**6. Follows journalistic principles**
7. Well-formulated and correct presentation	**7. Conveys most important information**
8. Addresses relevant events and topics	**8. Well-formulated and correct presentation**
9. Impartial, neutral	9. Admits and corrects inaccuracies
10. Ethical considerations	**10. Addresses relevant events and topics**

- Across all 49 attributes, there is a very high similarity (94%) between Sweden and Norway in terms of what attributes drive trust.
- In addition**, 8 out of 10 top trust drivers in Sweden are also top 10 in Norway.**

Top 10 drivers of trust out of 49 possible drivers
Bold = Top 10 drivers of trust in both countries

Based on statistical analysis, eleven factors (groups) emerge from the 49 media attributes

Credibility of content

How credible the content is in itself

Credibility of process

How credible the process and people behind the content is

Selectivity

What facts, events, and topics that are covered (or not)

Independence

The degree of independence from owners, commercial and political interests

Ethics

The level of ethical considerations and legal compliance

Societal role

The contribution to democracy and scrutiny of those in power

Personal relevance

The perceived relevance and usefulness of the content, for the individual user

Format

The comprehensibility and attractiveness of presentation

Diversity

The diversity of perspectives presented and of the backgrounds among creators

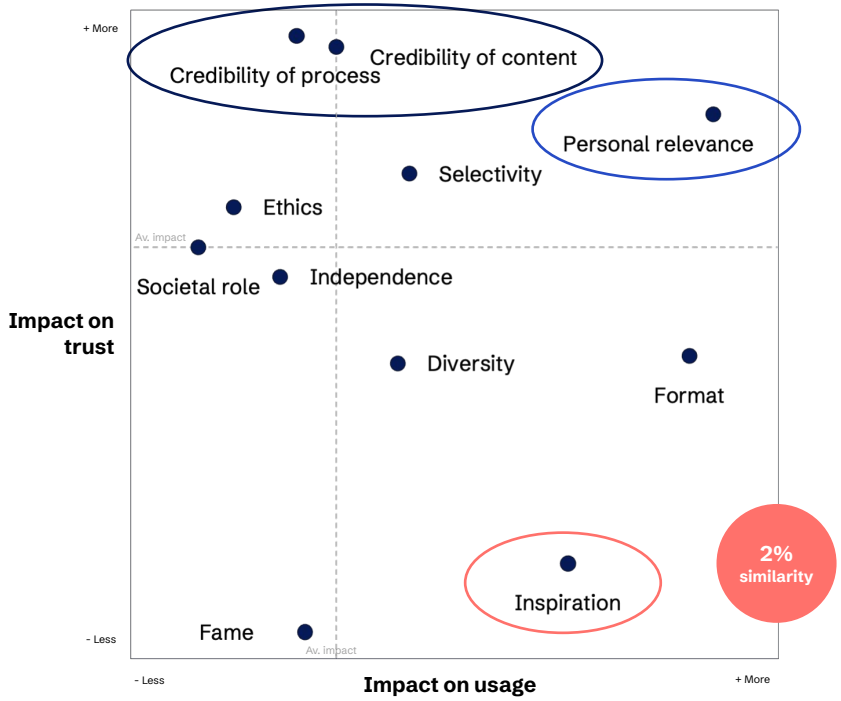
Inspiration

The inspiration and entertainment provided and the likeability of profiles

Fame

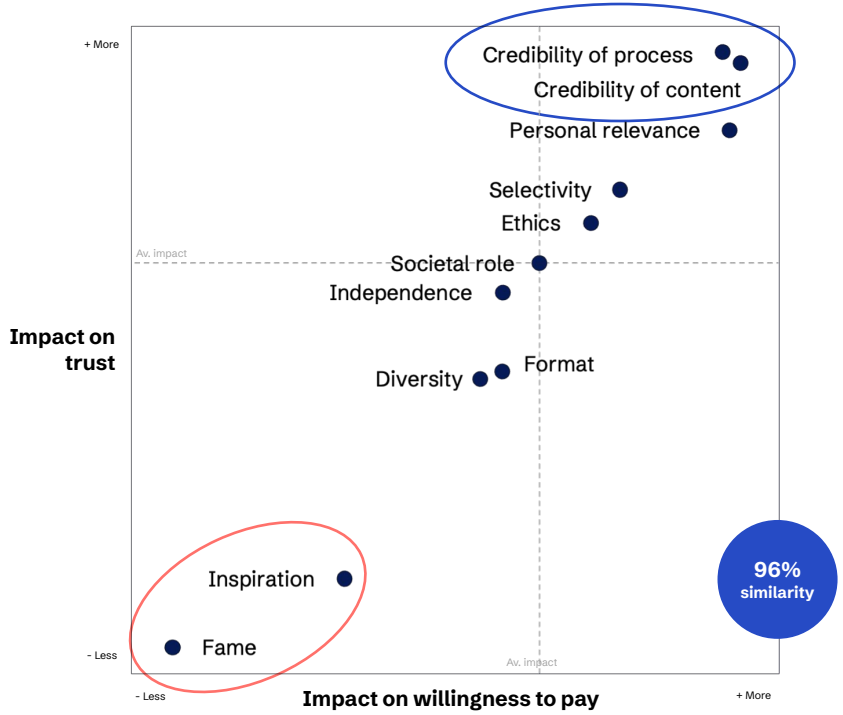
The fame of the brand and buzz of the content

Personal relevance is the common denominator for driving both trust and usage



- **Blue circle (impacts both trust and usage):** 'Personal relevance' is the only strong common denominator that drives *both* trust and usage. The other factors mainly drive trust *or* usage.
- **Black circle (impacts trust but not usage):** 'Credibility of process' and 'Credibility of content' are the most important factors for building trust – while unimportant for usage.
- **Red circle (impacts usage but not trust):** 'Inspiration' is a strong driving factor for usage but completely unimportant for trust.

Factors that impact trust in media are the same as what make users willing to pay



- **Blue circle (high impact on both trust and willingness to pay):** Credibility of process and content are the strongest factors driving both trust and willingness to pay.

- **Red circle (low impact on both trust and willingness to pay):** 'Fame' and 'Inspiration' are unimportant for both trust and willingness to pay.

Personal relevance important for both trust, usage and willingness to pay - while other factors driving usage differ

Factors ranked by impact on trust (#1 strongest impact)	Impact **trust**	Impact **usage**	Impact **willingness to pay**
1. Credibility of process	1	8	3
2. Credibility of content	2	6	1
3. Personal relevance	3	1	2
4. Selectivity	4	4	4
5. Ethics	5	10	5
6. Societal role	6	11	6
7. Independence	7	9	7
8. Format	8	2	8
9. Diversity	9	5	9
10. Inspiration	10	3	10
11. Fame	11	7	11

Top 3 impact

Bottom 3 impact

- **'Personal relevance'** is the only strong (top 3) **driver of *both* trust and usage.**
- **'Credibility of process'** is the **most important factor for building trust, and one of the most important for willingness to pay** – while unimportant for usage.
- **'Inspiration'** on the other hand is a **strong driving factor for usage** but **unimportant for trust and willingness to pay.**

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