

A

praytell

PRIMER X TOOLKIT

WELCOME TO THE REMIX ERA

The Emerging Media Landscape

ATTENTION, SHOPPERS!

Consumers are turning away from traditional sources of information and influence.

A Praytell x YouGov Earned Media study found what they're tuning into—and out of.

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ONE

PART ONE

Structural Change in the Media Landscape

Consumers are choosing their own media ecosystems, leaving brands to find new ways to be believed in an era of fractured influence.

MEDIAN AGE OF TV VIEWERS, BY NETWORK

Source: Nielsen



In the United States, consumer spending is a force of nature. U.S. households contribute \$18.82 trillion annually, or 69% of GDP, far more than other developed economies.

For decades, the engine behind this relentless consumption has been a steady current of brand marketing messages whispering through TV screens, gliding across web pages, wrapping themselves into PR campaigns, sponsorship deals, and even tiny screens at gas stations.

But in 2025, the once-dependable mechanisms of influence—media buys, ad placements, and carefully crafted campaigns—are colliding with a pervasive digital landscape.

Opaque algorithms, the inexorable rise of AI, and a redefined relationship between consumers and the media they consume are unseating the old guard.

The brand-driven media landscape, after a remarkable run, is slipping into history.

“THE ONCE-DEPENDABLE MECHANISMS OF INFLUENCE—MEDIA BUYS, AD PLACEMENTS, AND CAREFULLY CRAFTED CAMPAIGNS—ARE BEING SWALLOWED BY A PERVERSIVE DIGITAL LANDSCAPE GOVERNED BY OPAQUE, PROPRIETARY ALGORITHMS.”

CHAPTER ONE

From Control Rooms To Feedback Loops: How Cultural Gatekeepers Lost Their Grip In The Age Of Algorithms And Influencers

For much of modern history, traditional media wasn’t merely a conduit for brand storytelling and public relations—it was a cornerstone of cultural legitimacy.

Newspapers, glossy magazines, and the evening news were trusted arbiters of truth, taste, and influence. To appear on their pages or broadcasts was a seal of approval that could elevate a product, an idea, or a person into the public consciousness and unlock consumer demand.

As trust in traditional media erodes and television audiences dwindle, the structures that once governed influence and generated demand have unraveled.

In their place, social media algorithms, user-generated content, and data-rich ad networks have emerged as the new centers of power that shape our information ecosystem and modern storytelling. These new arbiters operate from opaque, algorithmically governed platforms powered by networks of users who provide both the supply and demand of content.

This disruption of the media landscape and traditional media business model is more than a shift in distribution channels; it’s a rewriting of the rules of trust and power.

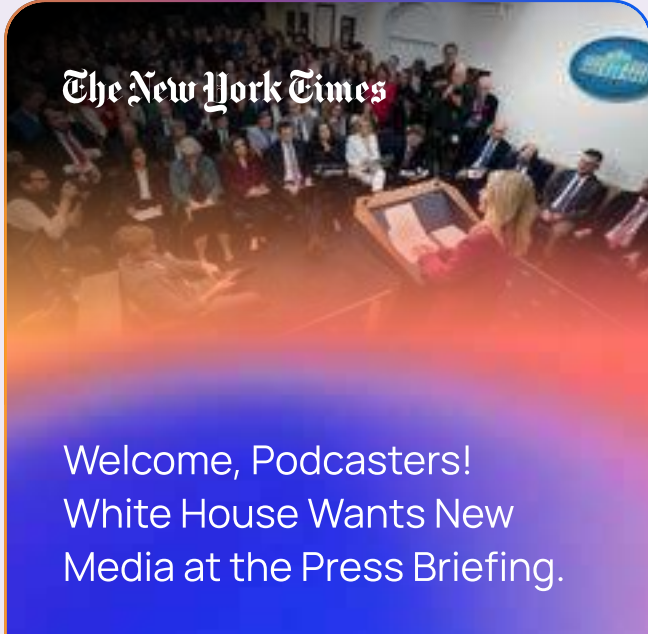
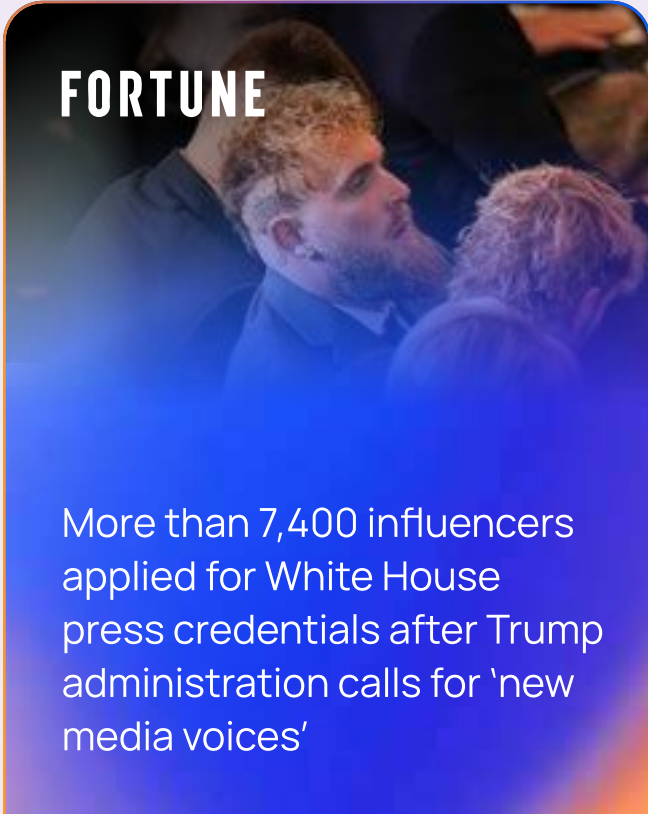
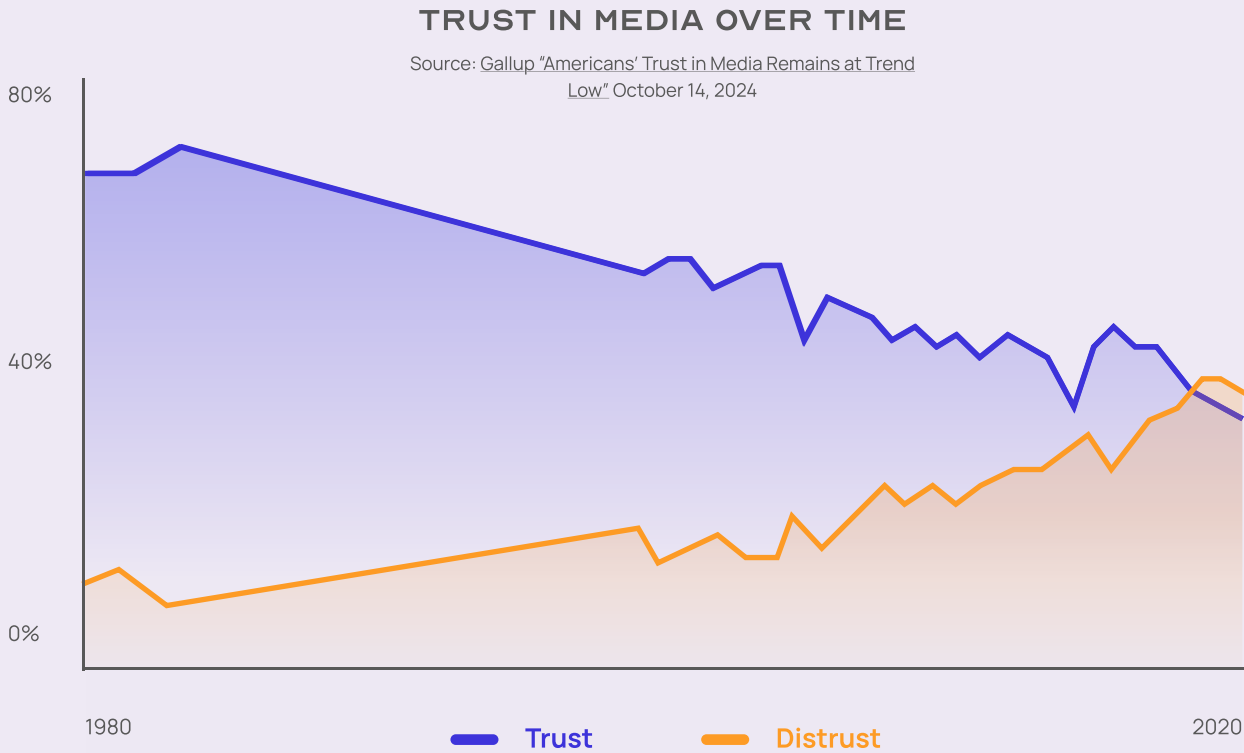
We now live in a world where influence is diffuse yet potent. A world where creators and consumers exist together in a feedback loop that rewards extremes and reshapes narratives based on the popularity, or virality, of an opinion, with no regard for the credentials of the source.

For brands, politicians, and cultural institutions in this new era, establishing a distinct, enduring narrative demands authenticity over authority, immediacy over permanence, and connection over control.

The shift was brought into stark relief during the 2024 presidential campaign. One candidate played by the traditional rules of media, leaning on network TV interviews, while spending nearly \$1 billion on paid advertising. The other candidate abandoned traditional media altogether, instead embracing podcasts, YouTube channels, and a mosaic of overlooked audiences fragmented across digital platforms.

The result was a decisive victory—not just for a candidate but for a new, fragmented media ecosystem.

In this new era, establishing a distinct, enduring narrative demands not just adaptation but an entirely new vocabulary for navigating influence.





FOR BRANDS AND ADVERTISERS, THE QUESTION IS NO LONGER MERELY HOW TO BE SEEN, BUT HOW TO BE BELIEVED IN A WORLD WHERE INFLUENCE IS INCREASINGLY DIFFUSE, AND TRUST IS HARDER TO EARN THAN EVER BEFORE.

Structural Change: Emerging Media is Winning the New Era of Media

In October 2024, Praytell partnered with YouGov to survey 1,300 U.S. consumers and probe the shifting dynamics of Americans' relationship with traditional versus emerging media. What surfaced was a nuanced portrait of how Americans perceive, trust, and engage with their media landscape, offering fresh insights for brands navigating this increasingly fragmented environment.

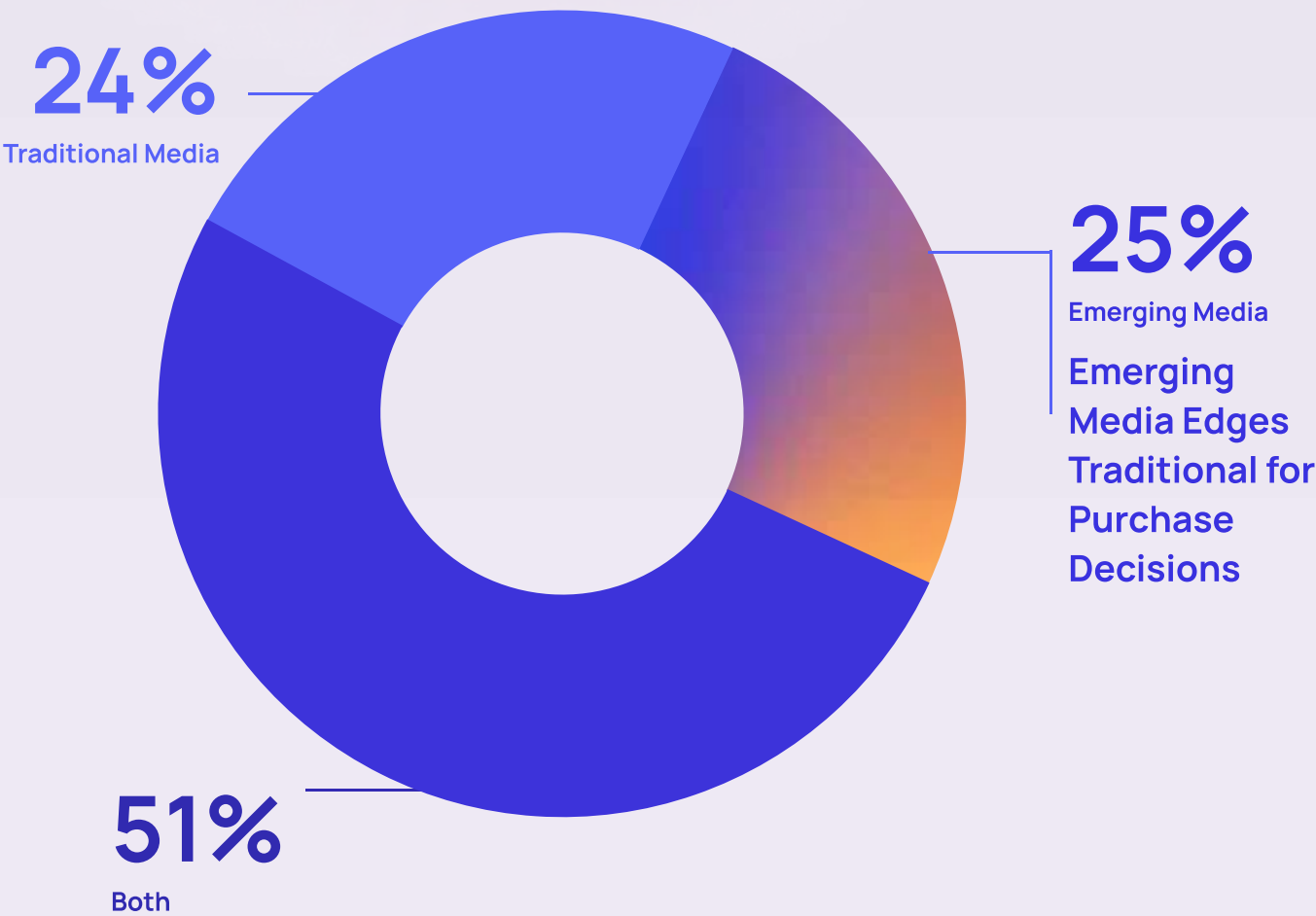
EMERGING MEDIA HAS FILLED THE TRUST GAP

For years, studies have chronicled the erosion of trust in mainstream media. In 2000, 55% of Americans believed in the reliability of major outlets to deliver factual reporting. By 2024, that number had plummeted to a stark 31%.* Unsurprisingly, political affiliation plays a key role in this decline: Republicans are twice as likely as Democrats to view mainstream media with skepticism.

Yet the Praytell x YouGov Earned Media Study revealed an unexpected twist. When asked which source informs purchasing decisions, more people chose emerging media than traditional media.

*Source: Gallup: Americans' Trust in Media, Oct 2024

PRAYTELL X YUGOV SURVEY RESULTS & ANALYSIS



Source: Praytell-YouGov Media Trust Survey, October 2024

1 ONE
WHICH SOURCE INFORMS MY
PURCHASE DECISIONS?

The key factors shaping these preferences are age and political beliefs. Older audiences lean toward traditional outlets, while younger audiences, particularly Gen Z and millennials, lean toward emerging platforms. Conservatives are more likely than liberals to favor emerging media, which they perceive as more aligned with their values.

Across demographics, audiences value emerging platforms for their novelty and their independent, diverse, and unfiltered voices. This combination of relatability and authenticity makes emerging media a credible alternative for many Americans.

2 TWO
WHICH SOURCE INFORMS MY
PURCHASE DECISIONS?

In a surprising twist, Gen Z and older religious conservatives in rural America have found common ground around their preference for emerging media.

Emerging Media Consumption: Generational Insights

COMMONALITIES: OLDER RURAL & GEN Z

Trust In Media

Higher trust in emerging media over traditional sources

Engagement Levels

Significant interaction with emerging media platforms

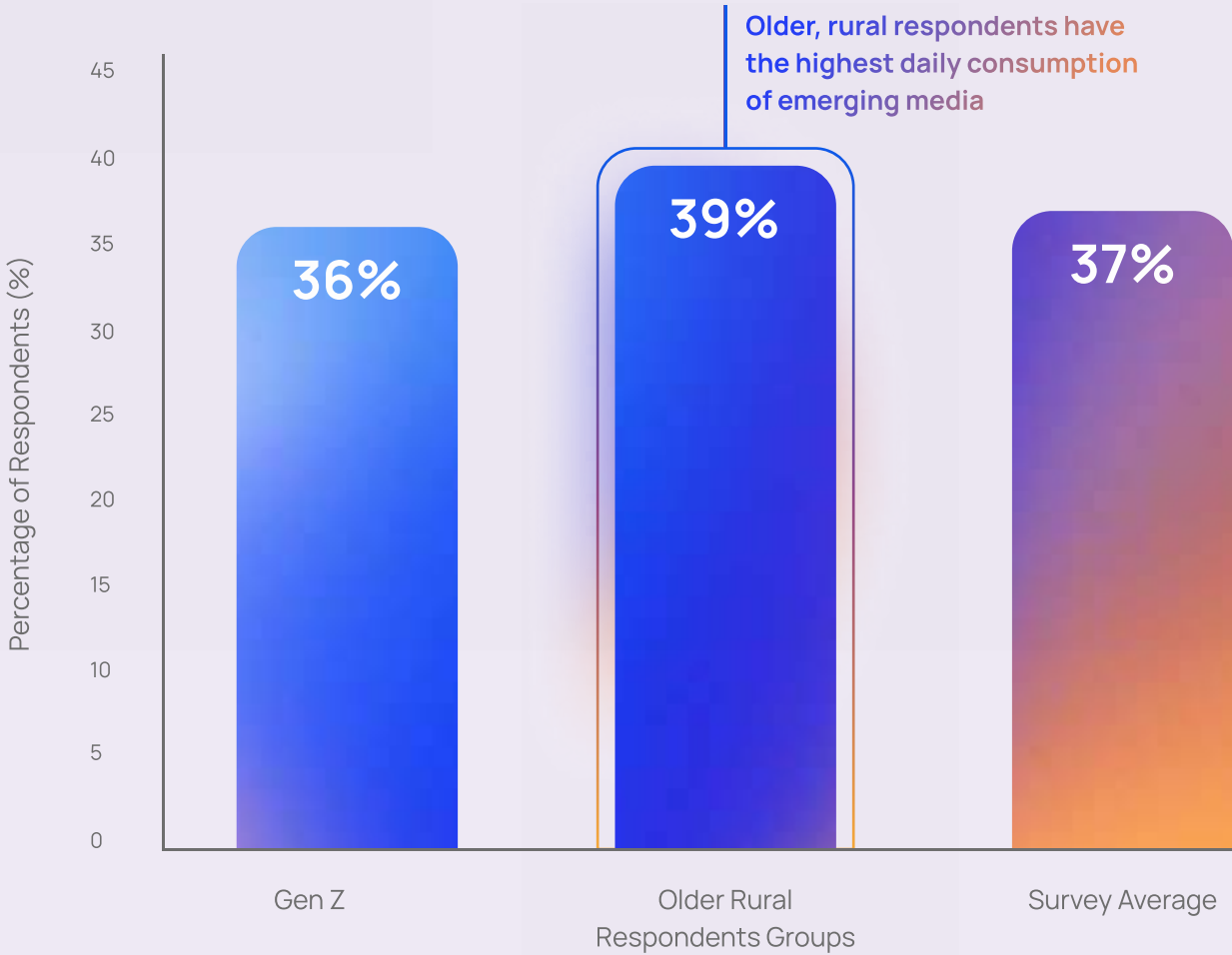
Opinion Influence

Emerging media impacts opinions in politics and personal interests

Emerging Media’s Unexpected Fan Base

DAILY USE OF EMERGING MEDIA

Source: Praytell-YouGov Media Trust Survey, October 2024



DAILY USE OF EMERGING MEDIA

Older rural respondents report the highest proportion of daily use of emerging media, surpassing even Gen Z.

Both groups value the interactive and niche content reflecting a preference for platforms that align with their worldviews. In fact, over 60% of respondents in each group cited “cultural alignment” and “authenticity” as reasons for trusting emerging media.

GENERATION Z PREFERENCES

Gen Z favors emerging media for its cultural relevance and focus on underrepresented voices and lifestyle topics often overlooked by traditional outlets.

Gen Z also shows higher engagement, trust, and likelihood of sharing emerging media content than the survey average, demonstrating its resonance with younger audiences.

RURAL, RELIGIOUS CONSERVATIVES

Among rural, religious conservatives, trust in emerging media is driven by its alignment with deeply held values and authenticity.

Respondents in these demographics report high daily usage of emerging media and a strong reliance on its ability to provide culturally relevant content.

3

THREE

PRESENTATION AND PERSONALITY—NOT EXPERTISE
OR CREDENTIALS—DRIVE ENGAGEMENT

The messenger is the message; audiences value authenticity and relatability over traditional expertise. More specifically, among Gen Z and millennials, cultural relevance, relatability, and alignment with personal values consistently outperformed traditional expertise as drivers of media trust.

COMMUNITY BUILDING:

Independent creators succeed by fostering connections based on shared values and experiences. This ability to create value-aligned content is especially critical for Gen Z, who prioritize cultural relevance in their media consumption.

INFLUENCERS:

Influencers thrive in lifestyle and wellness topics due to their relatability and authenticity. The survey revealed that younger audiences gave emerging media a higher trust score than traditional. This highlights how emerging media, like influencers, content resonates as personal and relatable though it lacks traditional authority.

THE RELATABILITY
ADVANTAGE:

Traditional media struggles to connect emotionally, especially with younger and more conservative audiences, in part because of trust issues.

22% of younger audiences overall said they distrust traditional media outlets versus 19% who distrust emerging media outlets. Further, influencers likely benefit from being perceived as “real people.” Influencers speak directly, in relatable ways that reflect a personal connection and help them bridge the gap between expertise and personal connection.

45%
of Gen Z and
millennials rely
on emerging
media for culture
and trend topics

vs
19%
for traditional
media

4

FOUR

DIVERSITY IS EMERGING MEDIA'S STRENGTH

The survey found that 42% of respondents believe emerging media is better at showcasing diverse perspectives than traditional media, while only 18% believe the same about traditional media outlets.

UNDERREPRESENTED
GROUPS:

Black respondents stand out for their higher trust in influencers' expertise. 56% of Black respondents rated influencers as having moderate to high authority, nearly twice as high as other cohorts. Gen Z was the only demographic cohort that gave influencers higher scores for authority.

DIVERSITY IN
PERCEPTION:

46% of Gen Z and millennials prefer emerging media for diverse perspectives.

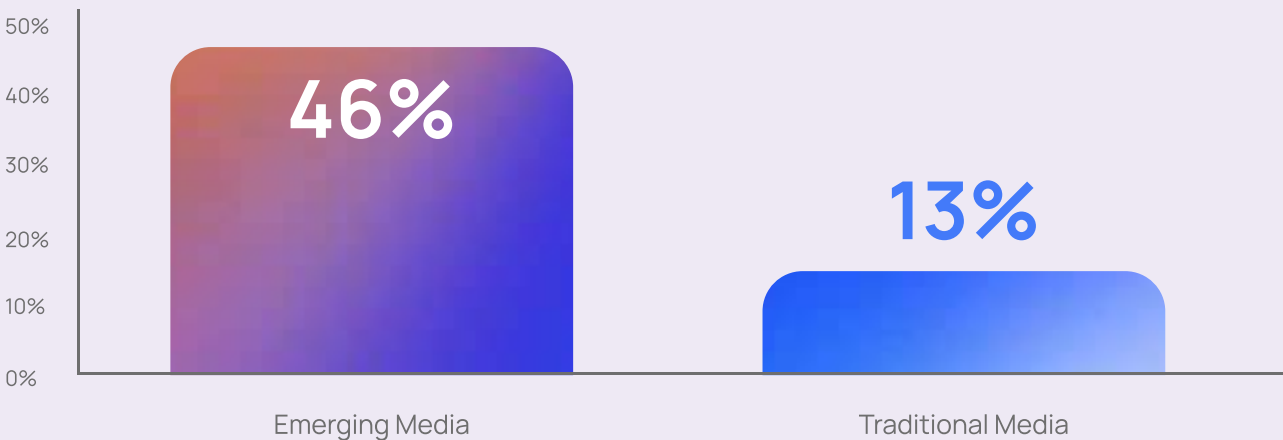
Only 13% prefer traditional media outlets, which highlights the role of emerging media in engaging younger audiences with culturally resonant content.

CULTURAL TENSION:

Traditional media has long claimed to represent a broad spectrum of perspectives, but these findings challenge that narrative. The dominance of traditional outlets in political and business reporting may come at the expense of diverse cultural storytelling, a gap that influencers are increasingly filling.

GEN Z & MILLENNIALS' MEDIA PREFERENCE FOR DIVERSE POVS

Source: Praytell-YouGov Media Trust Survey, October 2024



BRAND
OPPORTUNITY

Audiences increasingly reject hierarchical reporting styles in favor of collaborative and value-aligned narratives. So brands should explore engaging audiences by shifting from traditional, top-down messaging to collaborative, value-aligned narratives that resonate with consumers' personal beliefs and foster deeper, more authentic connections.

BRAND
OPPORTUNITY

For brands, this diversity creates opportunities to engage with niche audiences authentically and build true affinity and connection.

5 FIVE
EMERGING MEDIA DRIVES HIGHER ENGAGEMENT

A fundamental difference between emerging and traditional media lies in the ability of emerging media to create interactive, community-driven experiences through two-way engagement and more relatable, entertaining content formats—making it the preferred choice for interactivity, representation and entertainment.

CULTURAL RELEVANCE:

37% of respondents prefer emerging media for its alignment with culture and trends.

This is in comparison to only 21% who feel the same way about traditional media. Emerging media stands out for its ability to tap into trends and cultural moments.

REPRESENTATION:

42% of respondents also prefer emerging media for representation.

This is in comparison to just 17% for traditional media. Emerging media is significantly better at amplifying underrepresented voices.

INTERACTIVITY:

42% of respondents prefer emerging media for interactivity.

This is in comparison to 22% for traditional media, highlighting the advantage emerging media has in its ability for audiences to engage directly with creators to build connections and community.

ENTERTAINMENT VALUE:

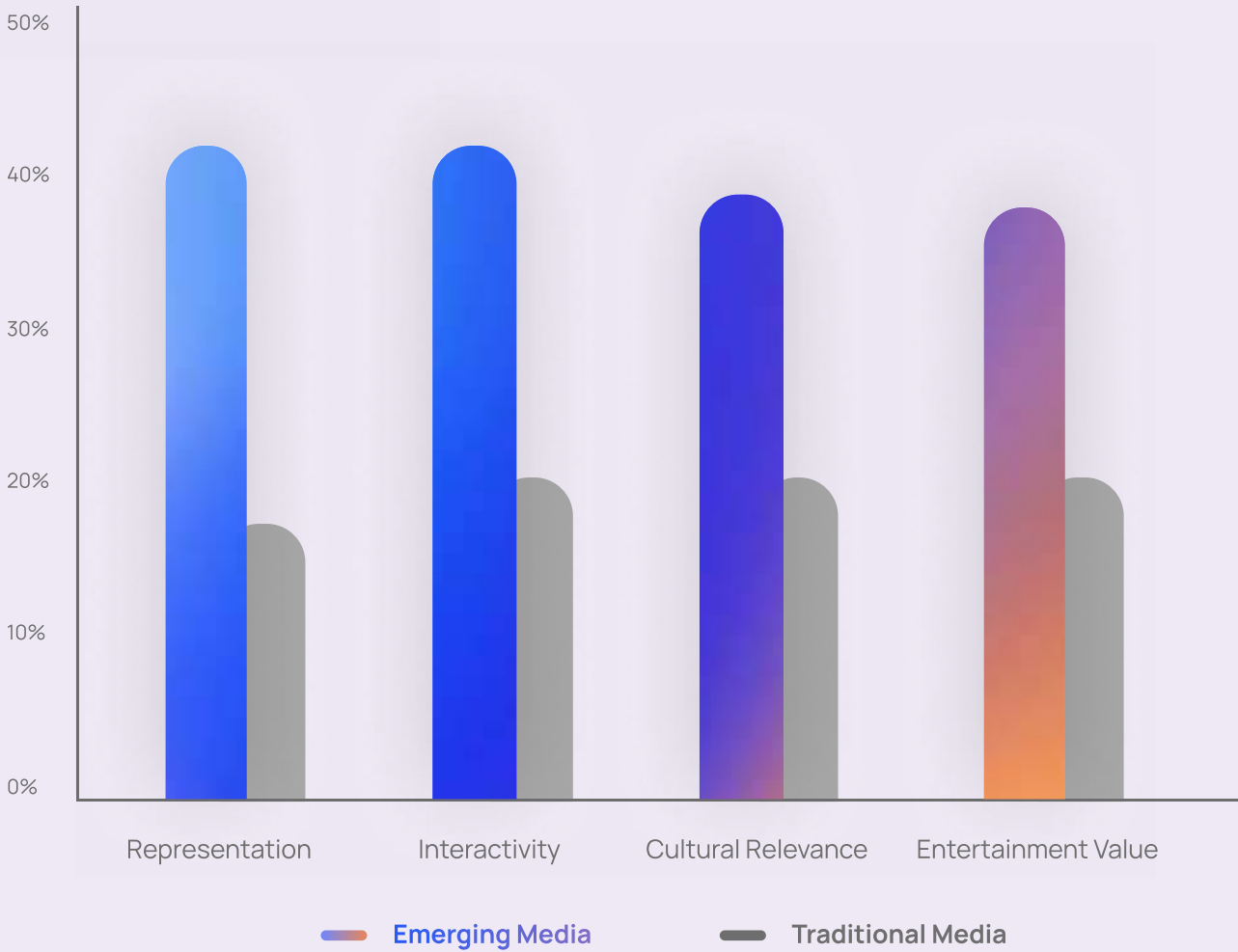
35% of respondents prefer emerging media for entertainment.

Versus 21% who prefer traditional media.

Why Audiences Lean into Emerging Media

KEY ADVANTAGES OF EMERGING OVER TRADITIONAL MEDIA

Source: Praytell-YouGov Media Trust Survey, October 2024



For brands, the interactive nature of emerging media creates unique opportunities to build relationships with audiences. The ability to gather feedback, engage in real-time conversations and align with niche communities make emerging media a valuable channel for building strong relationships with your audience.

SIX

TRADITIONAL AND EMERGING MEDIA INFLUENCE PURCHASE DECISIONS IN DIFFERENT WAYS

Emerging media exerts substantial influence on purchase decisions due to its high audience engagement and perceived utility. Traditional media, while slightly less dominant, still influences purchase decisions through trust and legacy reputation. (And, it's safe to assume, an affiliate link or two.)

ONE

POLITICAL IDEOLOGY:

Liberals show a stronger preference for emerging media for purchase decisions than conservatives or independents, driven by its perceived relevance and alignment with cultural trends. Conservatives are significantly less likely to strongly prefer emerging media.

TWO

AGE AND MEDIA PREFERENCES:

Younger generations are key drivers of emerging media influence: 34% of Gen Z and 35% of millennials favor emerging media for purchases, compared to 13% of Boomers + Silent Generation. Age has a significant negative coefficient, which tells us older respondents are less likely to rely on it.

THREE

AGE AND POLITICAL IDEOLOGY COMBINED:

The interaction of age and political affiliation is the strongest predictor of media preference. Younger conservatives show higher reliance on emerging media than older conservatives, highlighting the nuanced effect of combining these variables.

FOUR

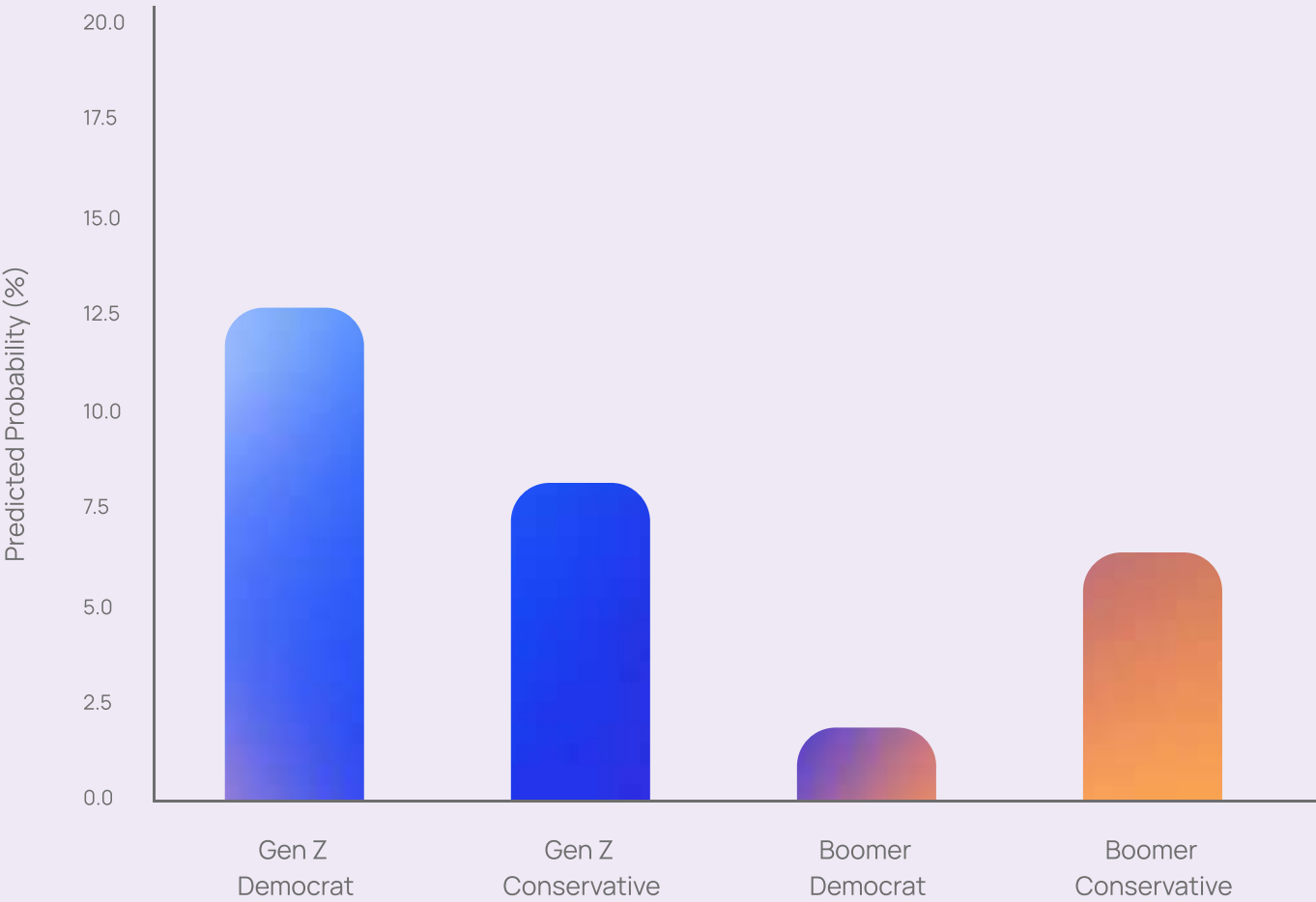
YOUNGER CONSUMERS AND EMERGING MEDIA:

Platforms like YouTube and Instagram dominate among younger audiences, with 79% of weekly YouTube users and 53% of weekly Instagram users falling into Gen Z and millennial demographics.

Emerging Media’s Appeal Varies by Audience

PREDICTED PROBABILITY OF PREFERRING EMERGING MEDIA BY AGE AND POLITICAL AFFILIATION

Source: Praytell-YouGov Media Trust Survey, October 2024



Source: Praytell-YouGov Media Trust Survey, October 2024

BRAND OPPORTUNITY

Brands targeting younger or conservative demographics should leverage emerging media to build trust and drive conversions around products and purchase journeys.

7 SEVEN
MEDIA CONSUMPTION AND ATTITUDES GO
BEYOND DEMOGRAPHICS

Trust and engagement are shaped by a complex interplay of factors, including media preference, political affiliation, and cultural alignment. These influences extend beyond age or generational trends, revealing deeper insights into how and why people connect with different media types.

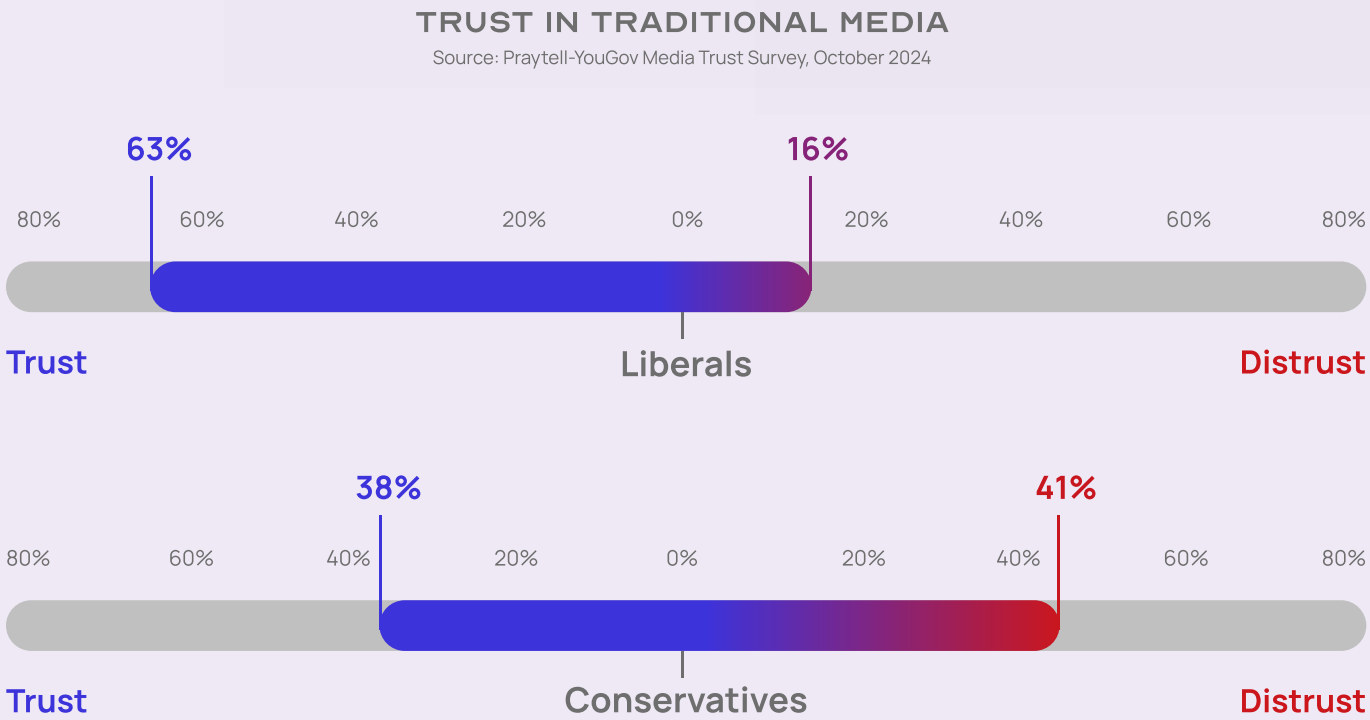
POLITICAL ALIGNMENT:

Liberals trust traditional media by a wide margin: 63% said they trust traditional media and only 16% said they distrust it. Conservatives were far more skeptical: 38% expressed trust in traditional media, while 41% expressed distrust, indicating widespread skepticism.

CULTURAL RELEVANCE:

Respondents across political and cultural divides consistently rank authenticity and shared values as the top reasons for trusting emerging media. 42% said they prefer emerging media because it features underrepresented voices, versus just 18% who said the same thing about traditional media.

Trust in Traditional Media Varies Significantly



The survey reveals that the cross cultural appeal of emerging media challenges conventional wisdom that age or the culture wars alone predict media trust and consumption.

POLITICAL VS. AGE DIVIDE:

Political beliefs are a slightly better predictor than age of trust in traditional media, but the combination of both variables, politics and age, was the strongest predictor of trust in traditional media. This demonstrates that no single variable was more influential than a combination of multiple variables. Humans are complex!

INDEPENDENT MEDIA AND NICHE TOPICS:

Podcasts and Substack newsletters dominate niche content areas, from wellness to hyperlocal news.

TRUST IN TRADITIONAL MEDIA VARIES BY OUTLET:

Among traditional media, national newspapers like The New York Times are trusted by 42% of all respondents, while TV networks like Fox News are trusted by 35%. This suggests fragmentation even within traditional media preferences.

GEN Z IS (STILL) MISUNDERSTOOD:

Despite being digital natives, 30% of Gen Z respondents trust traditional media for topics like financial literacy and global news, illustrating that emerging media doesn't completely dominate their preferences.

INFLUENCERS AS LIFESTYLE AUTHORITIES:

50% of respondents under 30 trust influencers for lifestyle and wellness recommendations, making this a key area for brand partnerships.

PURCHASE DECISIONS ARE PERSONAL:

Conservatives who are more likely to turn to emerging media for purchase decisions perceive it as better aligned with their values—41% of conservative respondents highlighted value alignment, compared to 26% of liberals.

BRAND OPPORTUNITY

Brands need to go beyond demographic segmentation to understand the interplay of values, media consumption habits, and political leanings and build interactivity into their narratives to more deeply engage audiences.

Emerging media has fundamentally reshaped the way audiences engage, what they trust, and how they consume content. For brands, this evolution demands more than just adapting to new platforms—it calls for a deeper understanding of the audience, a willingness to move beyond assumptions, and a strategic embrace of independent creators and the diverse ecosystems they inhabit.

In this fragmented landscape, where authenticity and relatability reign, brands must navigate a more intricate and nuanced terrain in order to tap into the full potential of today's media.



PART TWO

Unlocking Brand Success in the New Media Landscape

As credibility shifts from institutions to individuals, the rules of engagement for brands and audiences are being rewritten.

CHAPTER THREE

The New Media Framework for Winning Brands: Media as an Innovation Curve

The tectonic shifts in media today aren't merely a story of disruption—they're a redefinition of influence itself. For decades, traditional media outlets stood as cultural gatekeepers, wielding the power to validate or discredit ideas and shape public opinion.

Yet, as digital platforms become our primary means for communication and accessing information, with algorithms mediating what we see, the traditional media hierarchies are crumbling. The result is both exhilarating and unnerving: a media landscape unbound from its historical anchors, where trust and attention operate on radically new terms.

The profound implication here is that authority is no longer conferred from above but constructed in the moment, in the messy, decentralized interplay of creators and their audiences.



54%

of Americans* now get their news from social media platforms.

*Source: Pew Research Center

In addition to the cultural disconnect between U.S. consumers and traditional mainstream media outlets, the erosion of the broadcast business model has reshaped the news media landscape.

This new landscape has been described as a "barbell." One weight represents large media companies with healthy subscription revenues and cash flows reinvested into quality content with broad appeal.

The other weight represents emerging media—the independent creators, niche publishers, and studios distributing content directly to highly engaged audiences without substantial capital.

The thin bar in the middle symbolizes the shrinking mid-sized media companies that lack the agility of independent creators and the diversified revenue streams of large corporations.

However, we propose a more actionable framework to understand the current media ecosystem: The Innovation Curve.

Traditionally used to describe how new technologies and ideas spread through cultures, the Innovation Curve segments media adopters into five categories: Innovators, Early Adopters, Early Majority, Late Majority, and Laggards.

Innovators and Early Adopters represent emerging and independent voices—podcasters, newsletter writers, social-first news outlets, creators, and influencers. They move quickly, lack constraints, and amplify new ideas, people, brands, and trends. They are powerful catalysts in the early market for ideas.

Early Majority, Late Majority, and Laggards correspond to traditional media outlets that adopt and disseminate ideas, trends, and narratives that have "crossed the chasm" into mainstream acceptance.

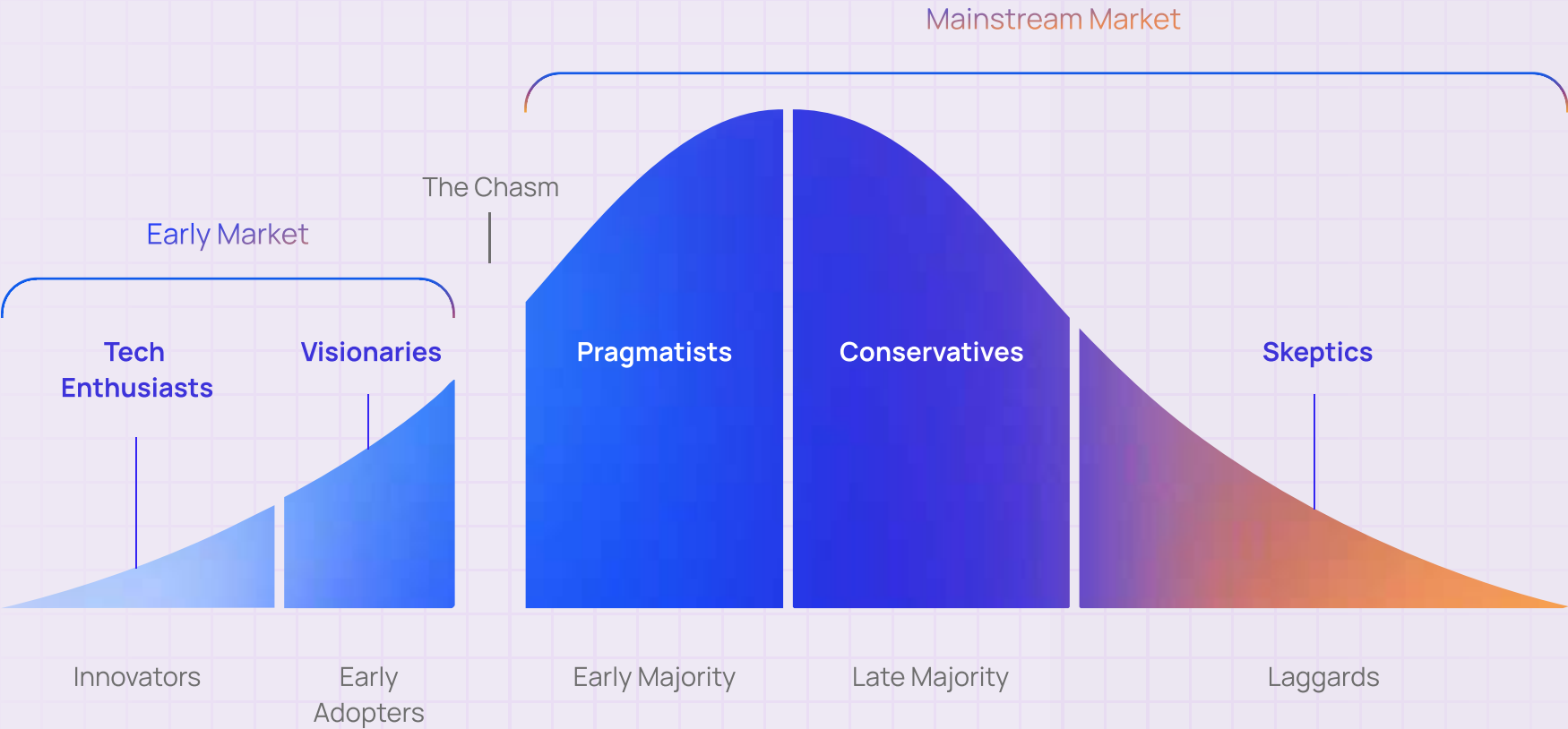
This framework illustrates that brands need to engage with the entire spectrum of the Media Innovation Curve to achieve both relevance and scale.

Focusing solely on the Innovators and Early Adopters—approximately 16% of the market—limits a brand's reach. While these segments are crucial for early momentum and staying ahead of trends, brands aiming for national or global impact must also engage with the mainstream audiences reached by traditional media.

Conversely, ignoring the early market poses significant risks. The early segments are hotbeds of innovation where emerging competitors can rapidly gain traction.

THE INNOVATION CURVE

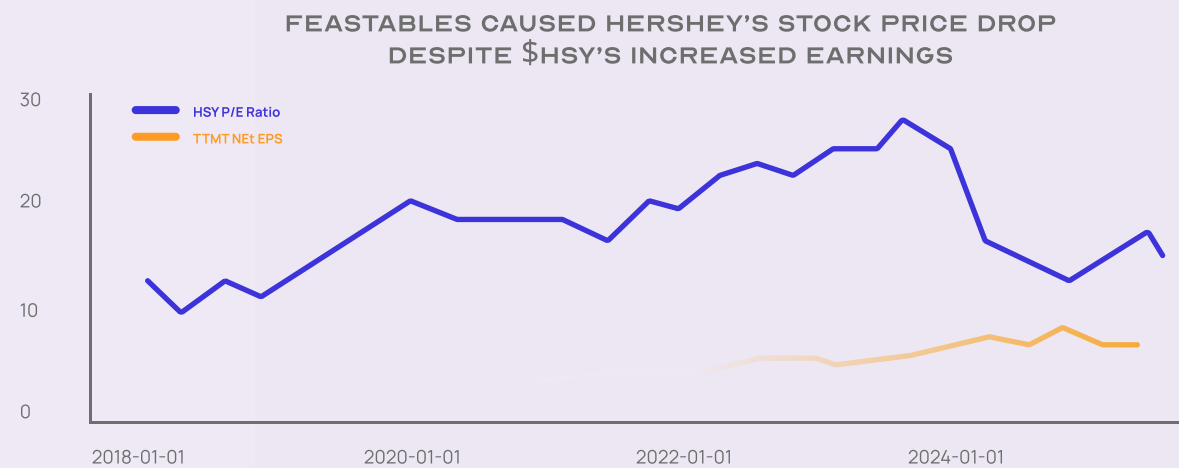
Source: Rogers, Everett: Diffusion of Innovations, 1962



A pertinent example is the rise of MrBeast's Feastables chocolate brand.

Leveraging his YouTube platform with over 100 million subscribers, MrBeast (Jimmy Donaldson) launched Feastables in 2022. By directly engaging with his massive audience, he disrupted the traditional confectionery market without the hefty marketing budgets typically required.

Hershey's, a legacy brand relying on conventional media strategies, witnessed a noticeable market impact. In fact, Hershey Co.'s stock faced pressures partly due to the unexpected competition from this new entrant.



Source: Bloomberg, JP Morgan Research, Edwin Dorsey, Macrotrends.net HSY P/E Ratio, TTM EPS

More recently, Alex Cooper—host of Call Her Daddy—introduced Unwell Hydration, using her devoted fan base to quickly gain traction in the crowded beverage space. Her launch highlights the power of creator-driven brands, with her built-in fan base eager to support and try the product. While it's too early to tell how her brand will impact more established ones, the immediate enthusiasm speaks volumes.

THE FEASTABLES SCENARIO UNDERSCORES THE IMPERATIVE FOR BRANDS TO BUILD OR EXPAND THEIR COMMUNICATIONS PLAYBOOK TO CAPITALIZE ON THE POTENTIAL FOR GROWTH FOUND IN EMERGING MEDIA AT THE EARLY STAGES OF THE MEDIA INNOVATION CURVE.

Failing to do so means potentially missing out on emerging trends, conversations, and consumer shifts that could redefine market landscapes overnight.

We are witnessing a once-in-a-century seismic shift—an eclipse of traditional media gatekeepers and a reordering of how information is communicated and consumed.

Authentic voices are rising as mainstream monopolies wane, flipping the power dynamics of the media landscape.

For brands and PR professionals, this upheaval isn't merely a challenge; it's an ultimatum. To cling to the old models is to risk irrelevance.

The Innovation Curve is more than a helpful framework to understand the evolving media ecosystem; it's a survival guide for navigating this new world.

Embracing both emerging media innovators and traditional legacy media is imperative. Early adopters on podcasts, social media, and independent platforms aren't fringe—they're catalysts propelling ideas into mainstream consciousness. Ignoring them dismisses the forces that can make or break a brand's future.

The question isn't whether the media landscape will continue to change—it's whether brands can adapt swiftly enough to remain relevant.

Innovation in Communications Strategy: The New Playbook

For decades, traditional media stood as a kind of societal lighthouse—steadfast, central, and authoritative. Its power derived largely from institutional trust, a bedrock that, according to our survey data, is now crumbling with disquieting speed.

In its place, emerging media platforms have risen, their allure rooted not in grandeur but in the intimacy and authenticity they promise—a currency more potent than ever in this fractured age. The structural changes in the media landscape demand a new communications playbook that can live up to this moment of transformation.

For marketers and communications professionals, there's only one option: don't be passive in the face of the new media ecosystem. Understand its effects so we can shape it, rather than being shaped by it.

// You are the media now. They are the past.



// This is a war to restore faith in our work. And we're losing—decisively.




We expect AI to continue to drive structural changes in the information landscape. Audiences will fragment further, as they will only have more options for content, which will pose challenges to legacy publishers and benefit emerging media on the whole. Elon Musk's recitation of "you are the media now" is a good indication that emerging media is showing no signs of slowing down as a cultural force.

In response to these challenges, traditional media will have to evolve both in form and function in order to regain trust and win attention. Notably, this is already happening in many areas—from legacy media outlets innovating their formats to more generally acknowledging the work to be done to regain trust. As Axios co-founder and CEO Jim VandeHei recently said in response to Musk's view of the media, "This is a war to restore faith in our work. And we're losing—decisively."


Media theorist Marshall McLuhan saw this coming. He categorized media into "hot" and "cool" based on the level of audience participation.

HOT MEDIA


COOL MEDIA




Static news headline




Stuffy news anchor




Corporate press release



Dynamic scroll



CEOs on social



Live podcasts

"HOT" MEDIA represents traditional media. It creates distance between the audience and the content and tends to be a more passive consumption experience without interaction.

"COOL" MEDIA, like emerging media, requires active participation and interpretation, as the lines between content and audience—as well as fact and opinion—are blurred. Cool media creates an environment where emotional resonance and shared values carry more weight than authoritative presentation or traditional standards of accuracy.



Media as a trusted institution is a relatively new idea and it must evolve and innovate in order to retain a critical role of gatekeeper to factual, reliable information an informed public relies on.

The collapse of distance between the media and its audience is what Musk is referring to. The vanguard of emerging media is not just the fact that we are the media now, but the populist notion that emotional resonance outweighs objective verification. This new media environment doesn't simply reflect Americans' emerging cultural preferences, it is creating new preferences and an environment where they can flourish.

TRUTH IS NOW A SHARED, SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE RATHER THAN AN OBJECTIVE STANDARD.

From Big Hits to Broad Presence: New Rules for Rethinking PR in a Fragmented Media Age

Historically, communications professionals have been banging the drum of quality over quantity—for good reason. Moving the needle takes storytelling chops, assets that pop, the right outlet, the right journalist, the right moment, etc. Nothing felt better than when that Forbes feature or People piece hit—the impressions felt real, and the influence genuine.

Today, those hits are few and far between. When they do come, they're celebrated for their SEO impact more than the watercooler conversations they inspire. Tomorrow, the value of a killer feature story will be that it is included in an answer by multiple Gen AI LLMs. So, in today's fragmented media environment, brands must balance quality with quantity, ensuring consistent visibility across platforms without sacrificing authenticity.



WHY THIS MATTERS

Consumers no longer rely on a single trusted source for information. Instead, they navigate personalized media ecosystems where content is served algorithmically. This shift necessitates a more integrated approach to PR, combining traditional storytelling with the immediacy and relatability of emerging media platforms.

PLAYBOOK

THE NEW PLAYBOOK

To stay relevant, brands must embrace fluid, cross-platform strategies powered by culture-savvy creators.

The playbook for winning in the new media landscape

KEY TACTICS TO IMPLEMENT

ONE

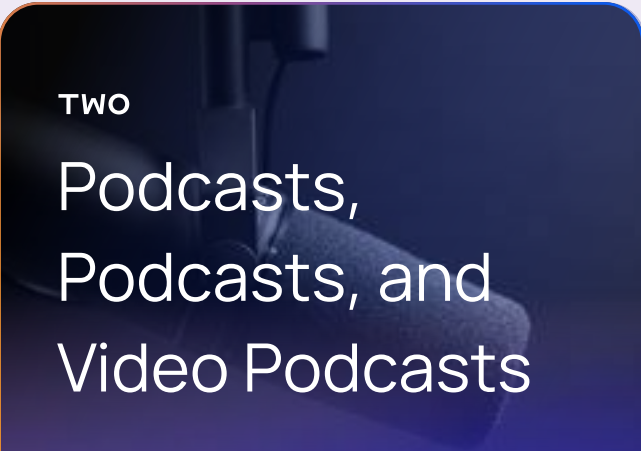
Treat YouTube Like Broadcast TV



YouTube has become a dominant platform for long-form, high-engagement content. Consumers now watch millions of hours of YouTube on their TVs, with podcasts and entertainment shows leading the way. Instead of solely focusing on traditional TV segments like Good Morning America, PR teams should target YouTube shows like Hot Ones or Chicken Shop Date, which combine entertainment with highly engaged, niche audiences.

TWO

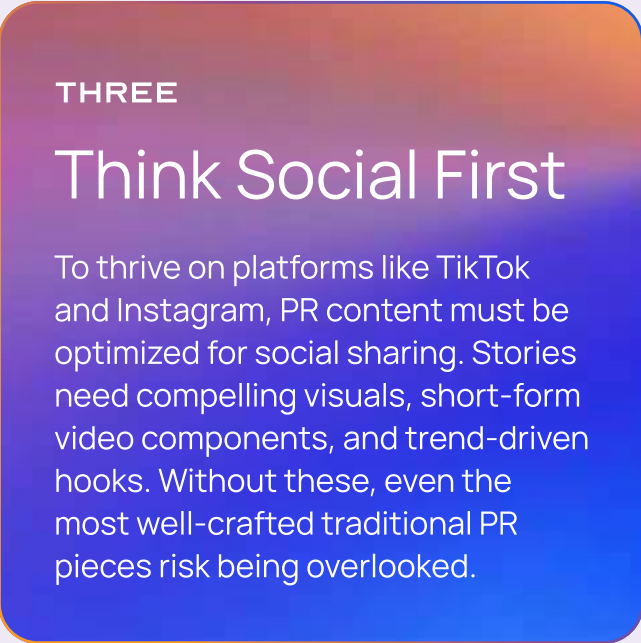
Podcasts, Podcasts, and Video Podcasts



Podcasting has evolved from a niche medium into a mainstream platform dominated by video content, particularly on YouTube. For Gen Z, podcasts have become a preferred way to engage with long-form ideas. For all generations, podcasts represent an intimate connection. Brands can partner with influential podcasters, sponsor episodes, or create their own branded podcasts to reach this highly engaged audience.

THREE

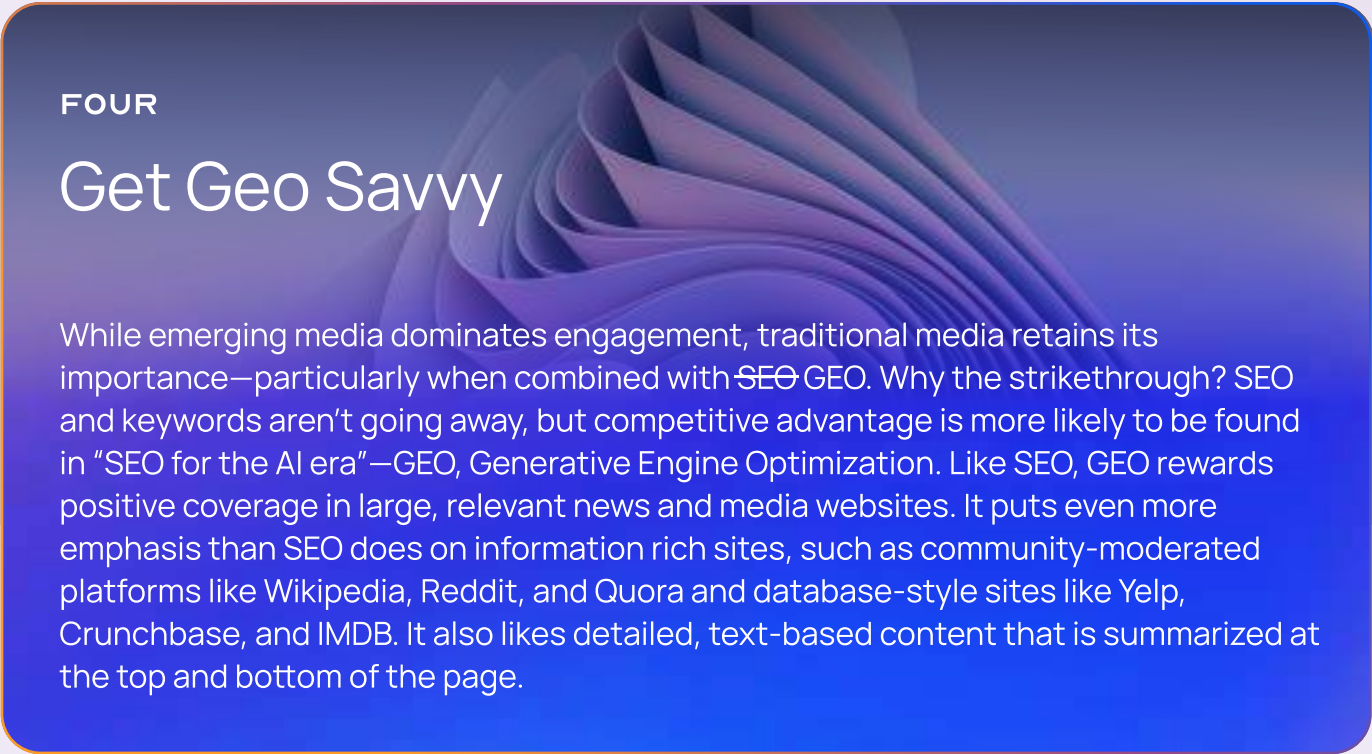
Think Social First



To thrive on platforms like TikTok and Instagram, PR content must be optimized for social sharing. Stories need compelling visuals, short-form video components, and trend-driven hooks. Without these, even the most well-crafted traditional PR pieces risk being overlooked.

FOUR

Get Geo Savvy



While emerging media dominates engagement, traditional media retains its importance—particularly when combined with ~~SEO~~ GEO. Why the strikethrough? SEO and keywords aren't going away, but competitive advantage is more likely to be found in "SEO for the AI era"—GEO, Generative Engine Optimization. Like SEO, GEO rewards positive coverage in large, relevant news and media websites. It puts even more emphasis than SEO does on information rich sites, such as community-moderated platforms like Wikipedia, Reddit, and Quora and database-style sites like Yelp, Crunchbase, and IMDB. It also likes detailed, text-based content that is summarized at the top and bottom of the page.

FIVE

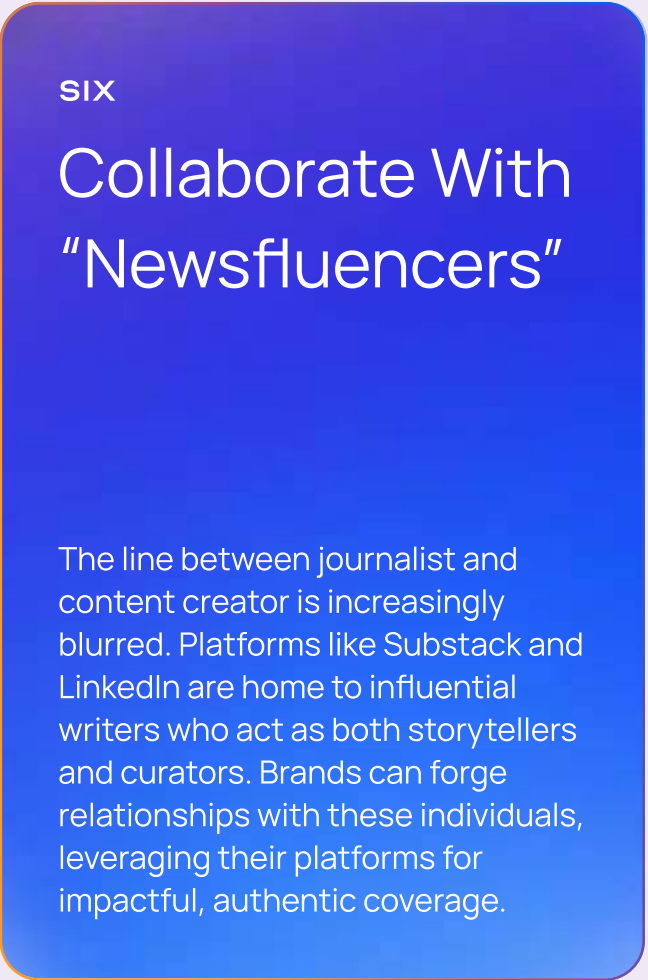
Integrating Emerging and Traditional Media



The most effective communications strategies don't choose between emerging and traditional media—they integrate both. Legacy outlets still provide credibility and reach, especially for reputation-building. Meanwhile, emerging media offers authenticity, relatability, and direct audience engagement. By combining the strengths of both, brands can maximize their impact.

SIX

Collaborate With "Newsfluencers"



The line between journalist and content creator is increasingly blurred. Platforms like Substack and LinkedIn are home to influential writers who act as both storytellers and curators. Brands can forge relationships with these individuals, leveraging their platforms for impactful, authentic coverage.

SEVEN

Flood the Zone

The current media landscape favors a high volume of content that keeps brands top of mind. While traditional PR campaigns might focus on a few high-impact pieces, today's strategies require a steady drumbeat of diverse, platform-specific content. Collaborations with creators, reactive campaigns, and real-time engagement are critical to staying relevant.

EIGHT

Shorten the Funnel

Emerging media is collapsing the traditional sales funnel. Consumers are moving from awareness to action faster than ever, often within a single platform. PR strategies should integrate elements of sales enablement, ensuring that storytelling not only inspires but also drives conversions.

THE OPPORTUNITY FOR BRANDS

ONE Be Authentic:

Align with creators and platforms that reflect your brand's values.

TWO Be Visible:

Increase touch points across diverse media ecosystems to stay top of mind.

THREE Be Adaptable:

Respond quickly to cultural shifts and emerging trends, using data to inform decisions.

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

A New Era of Influence

The communications landscape is undergoing a seismic transformation. For brands, this is both a challenge and an opportunity. By embracing innovation, authenticity, and integration, they can not only survive but thrive in this new media era. The playbook outlined here is a starting point, but success will ultimately depend on a willingness to experiment, adapt, and engage with audiences in genuine, meaningful ways.