

GUEST EDITORIAL

## What do we pay attention to? Digital innovations in the competition for attention

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There are only 24 hours a day, and our capacity for attention is limited. Yet, in our digital world, everything and everyone competes for this attention, using a wide range of technical and psychological strategies (Bachmann & Siegert, 2021). This “hypercompetition” (Hollifield, 2006) for attention was chosen as the theme for the annual conference of the Swiss Association of Communication and Media Research, held in April 2023. The conference, titled “What Do We Pay Attention To? Digital Innovations in the Competition for Attention,” was hosted by the Institute of Communication and Marketing at Lucerne University of Applied Sciences.

We want to draw your attention to four contributions presented at the conference. The four articles in this Thematic Section contribute to understanding the competition for attention from distinct and varied perspectives. Hence, we hope you will devote some of your precious attention to exploring these enlightening articles.

In their article titled “Just Weather and Cheese? Analysis of the Content of Swiss Local Media Online with Different Business Models,” *Caroline Dalmus, Urban Kalbermatter, Johanna Burger, Matthias Künzler, and Urs Dahinden* explore the economic pressures exerted on local media amidst the new structural transformation of the public sphere. Their research examines the online content of 12 Swiss local media outlets, uncovering various revenue approaches and significant diversity in terms of issues covered, regional focus, and originality among the outlets. The findings indicate that no single strategy

suffices in the battle for audience attention; diverse tactics are essential to engage readers effectively.

The article “All Ears On? A Survey on Podcasters’ Profiles, Practices, and Self Perceptions” by *Vera Katzenberger and Jana Keil* delves into the understudied domain of podcast creators. Despite the growing popularity of podcasts, or in other words, the significant attention they receive from listeners, the persons behind these podcasts received only limited attention from researchers. This exploratory study surveys 1073 podcasters across Austria, Germany, and Switzerland to gather insights into their demographic profiles, content creation practices, and perceptions of their roles. The findings reveal that the typical podcaster profile includes being predominantly male, middle-aged, and possessing an academic background, yet many lack formal journalism training. These podcasters are primarily driven by goals to entertain, educate, and inform, demonstrating a keen orientation toward meeting audience needs to capture their listener’s attention.

*Fiona Fehlmann, Carmen Koch, and Guido Keel* explore the state of media literacy education in their article, “What do Teachers Pay Attention to When Teaching Media Literacy? An Inventory for the Swiss Upper Secondary Level.” Given the digital innovations in the competition for attention and the dangers of widespread disinformation, media literacy is critical concerning individual self-determination and democratic participation. Conducting an online survey and guided interviews with teachers, this study assesses media liter-



acy education among Swiss upper secondary students, typically aged 15 to 19. The results reveal a fragmented landscape in which teachers' intrinsic motivation is pivotal in media literacy education. This underscores the need for standardized approaches and enhanced resources to ensure a comprehensive and practical media literacy curriculum.

The article "Gamers for Boys and Models for Girls: Adolescents in Switzerland Pay Attention to Gender-Stereotypical Influencers," by *Lilian Suter and Tim Eggli*, explores the role of influencers as role models for adolescents in Switzerland. Based on a survey of 1049 adolescents aged 12 to 19, the study investigates the gender and content preferences of their favorite influencers. The findings reveal significant gender differences, with boys favoring comedy and gaming content, while girls prefer how-to/style and music/dance topics. Both genders tend to pay attention to influencers who provide personal insights, reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes. This study highlights influencers' vital role in shaping adolescent views on gender roles in digital attention markets.

The four articles in this Thematic Section offer valuable insights into the interplay between digital innovations and the competition for attention. A key to capturing audience attention is to seriously consider that

the attention of audiences is both limited and precious. Given that there are only 24 hours a day, this guest editorial is intentionally brief, ensuring that every moment spent with this content is valuable. Therefore, we would like to draw attention to the authors for enriching our understanding with their insights. We extend our heartfelt thanks to the authors and reviewers.

### Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

### References

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