

How to apply a news user model in digital publishing

WAN-IFRA Dubai 2021

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Content, Transformation, Innovation

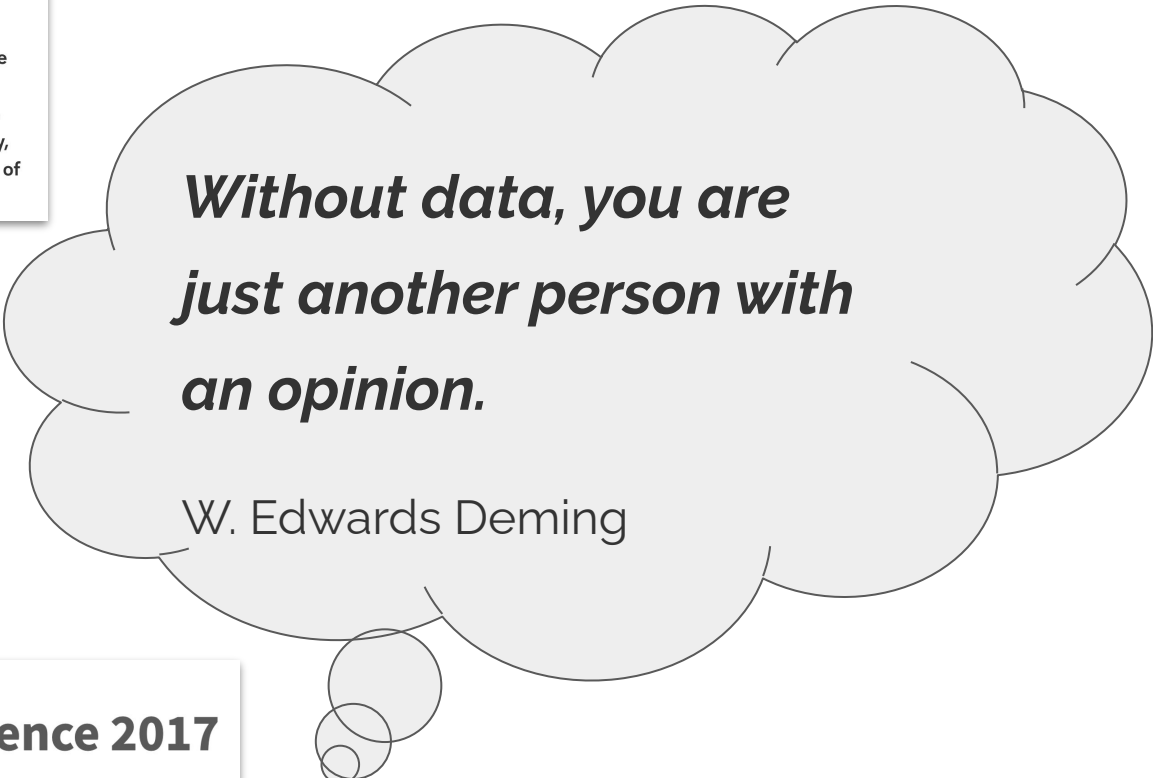
How is my experience relevant to this talk? Career

- 20+ years as a journalist and editor: radio, online, video, social - BBC News Russian, BBC News and BBC World Service
- Chief Content Officer, Culture Trip
- Independent digital consultant, working with publishers, content creators, tech companies
- Board Member, World Editors' Forum, WAN-IFRA
- Leader in Residence, University of Central Lancashire, UK



BBC's Shishkin: '3 quotes I always use in digital transformation projects'

Over the past few years I've been involved in a number of digital news change projects at the BBC, either related to workflow changes, reprioritisation of content creation, and I thought it would be helpful to share a few thoughts on how I approach what is undoubtedly one of the hot areas in the news industry, says Dmitry Shishkin, Digital Development Editor, BBC World Service, author of this guest column.



Without data, you are just another person with an opinion.

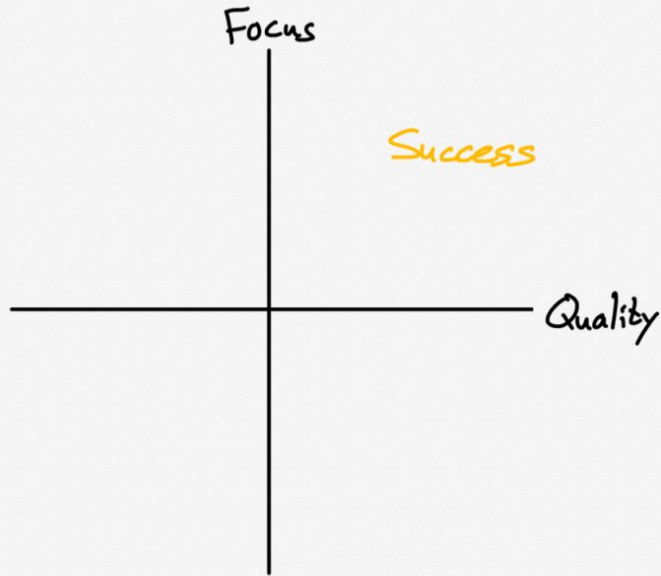
W. Edwards Deming

13 Mar 2017 to 14 Mar 2017 Dubai United Arab Emirates (the)

WAN-IFRA Middle East Conference 2017

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The basics: Success = delivering superior quality in your niche



... "What is important to note, though, is that while quality is relatively binary, **the number of ways to be focused — that is, the number of niches in the world — are effectively infinite**; success, in other words, is about delivering superior quality in your niche — the former is defined by the latter"...

Audience-centric approach to doing news based on user needs*

1. **'Hard' news is not enough** to attract people regularly or with sufficient engagement.
2. Commodity, 'agenda' news are everywhere, **relevancy, unique takes** and **engagement become the differentiator**.
3. There is misalignment between what audience wants in digital - information, yes, but also **understanding, inspiration, utility, fun** - and what it currently gets from media outlets.

Newsroom mission is directly linked to its audience user needs

1. **Failing** to satisfy them means **loss** of audience and **lack** of engagement.
2. **Growth**, on the other hand, comes when different user needs are addressed **consistently, creatively and strategically**.
3. Newsrooms operating with no appreciation to user needs are drifting.

User needs model is a trend in the sector


“Engagement’ will get the respect it deserves as the center of excellence within local media organizations, not an offshoot concept that is often disregarded and undervalued.”

What Do News Readers Really Want to Read About? How Relevance Works for News Audiences

“My job, and the job of any community manager, is to facilitate the creation of content that *solves* a problem our readers have, not just reports on it.”

5 questions
about the
user needs,

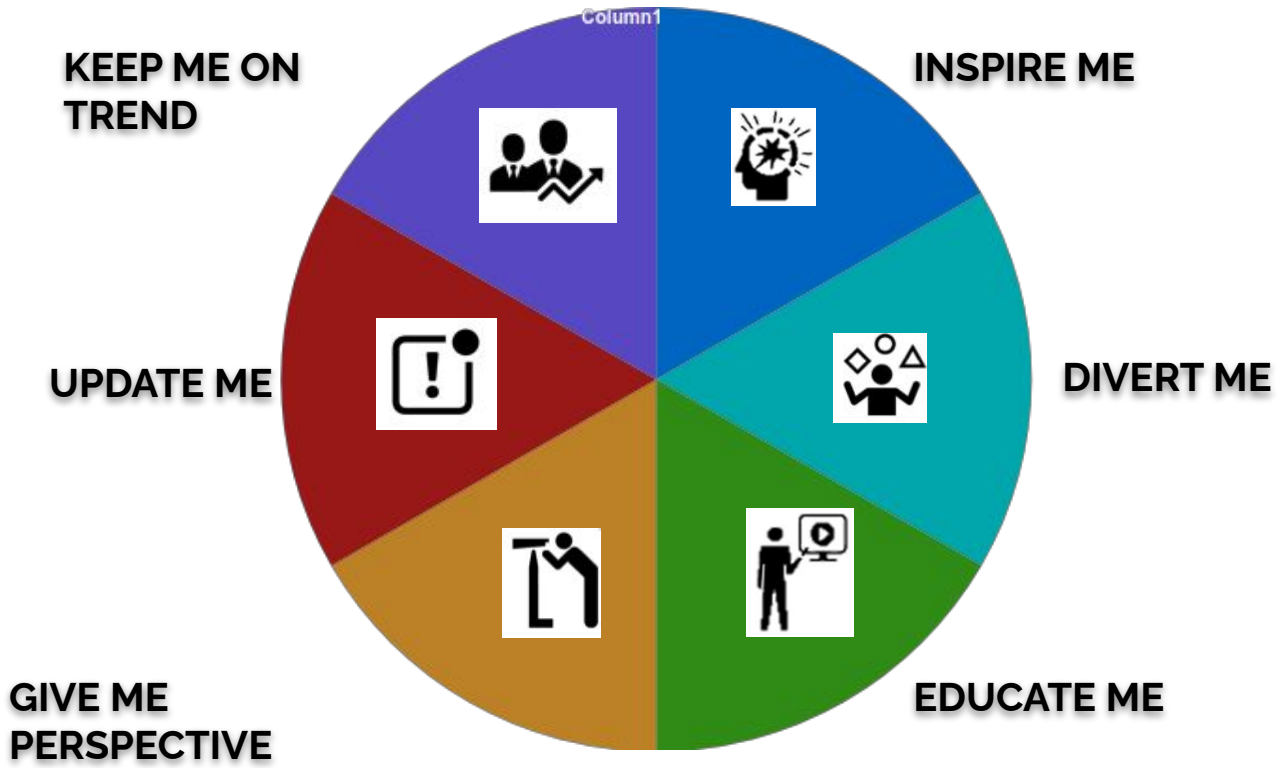
“That new franchise you’re building, that podcast, the video series: Who is it for? What need is it serving? What will the audience do with it? Do they really want it, need it? Or are we just trying to keep their attention long enough for the ad to serve?”



Data will help you create a product that offers the highest value to your most important audiences, in a way that will keep their trust and loyalty.

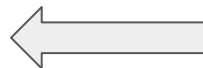
Lucy Kueng, Transformation Manifesto

User needs approach to doing news - a BBC model



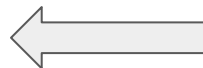
User needs examples - Biden/Harris' inauguration

Biden inauguration: New president sworn in amid Trump snub



Update me: A regular news story, the inauguration happened, what happened, read about how it went

Who is Kamala Harris, vice-president?



Educate me: tell me more about the person in the VP role.

Biden's inauguration speech calls for unity - it won't be easy

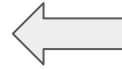


Give me perspective: an analysis of how the event went, and what it means for the new administration might start with

Biden Inauguration: What will Joe Biden do first?

User needs examples - Biden/Harris' inauguration

Biden inauguration: Katy's anthem, Bernie's mittens and other moments



Keep me on trend: What do people say about this event on social media? Why is this event trending

Kamala Harris' uncle: 'Her mother was a great influence'



Inspire me: features someone who overcame odds, make me feel socially responsible, make me feel proud of other people

Biden's new-look Oval Office is a nod to past US leadership



Divert me: show me something lighter, something less serious connected to this story

Other 'user needs wheels' out there - a TRT model



Other 'user needs wheels' out there - a Vogue Int model

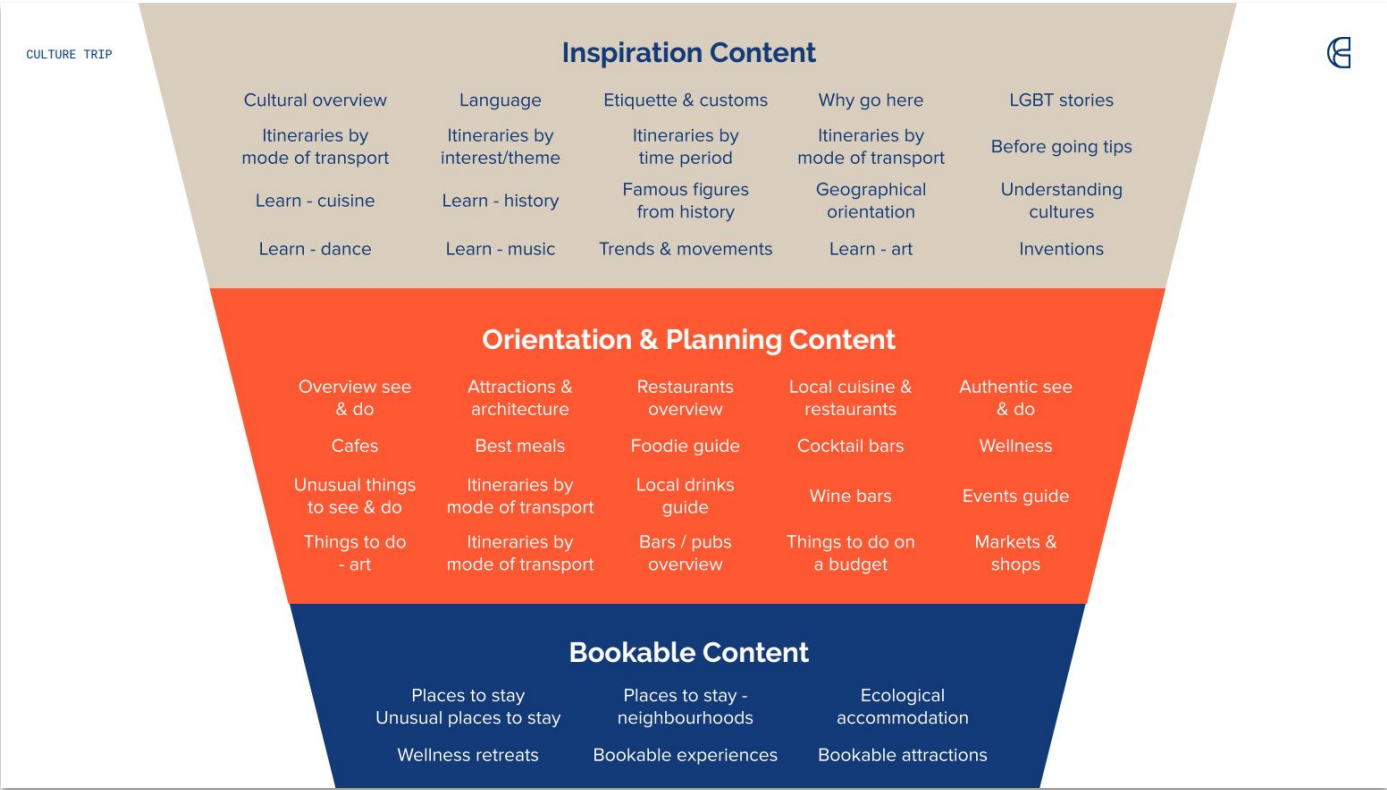


Other 'user needs wheels' out there - a WSJ model

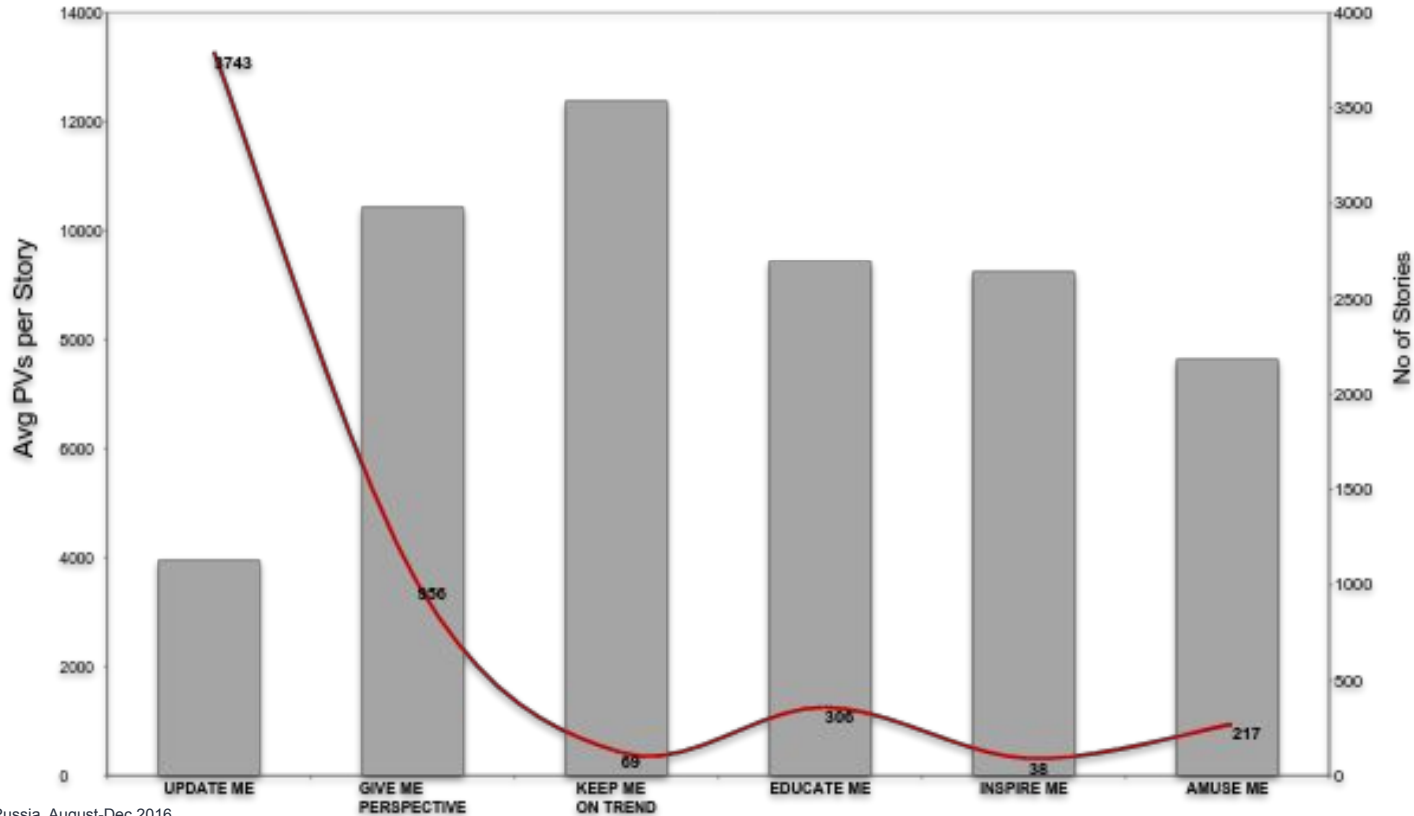
detailed below:

- **Update Me:** Keeps me up-to-date with the latest news and trends
- **Give Me an Edge:** Helps me to stay one step ahead of others
- **Connect Me:** Connects me with people around ideas or experiences
- **Entertain Me:** Is entertaining and fun, brightening the world around me
- **Help Me Understand:** Helps me understand, improve and learn
- **Inspire Me:** Provides ideas for new things to try or do

Other 'user needs wheels' out there - a Culture Trip model



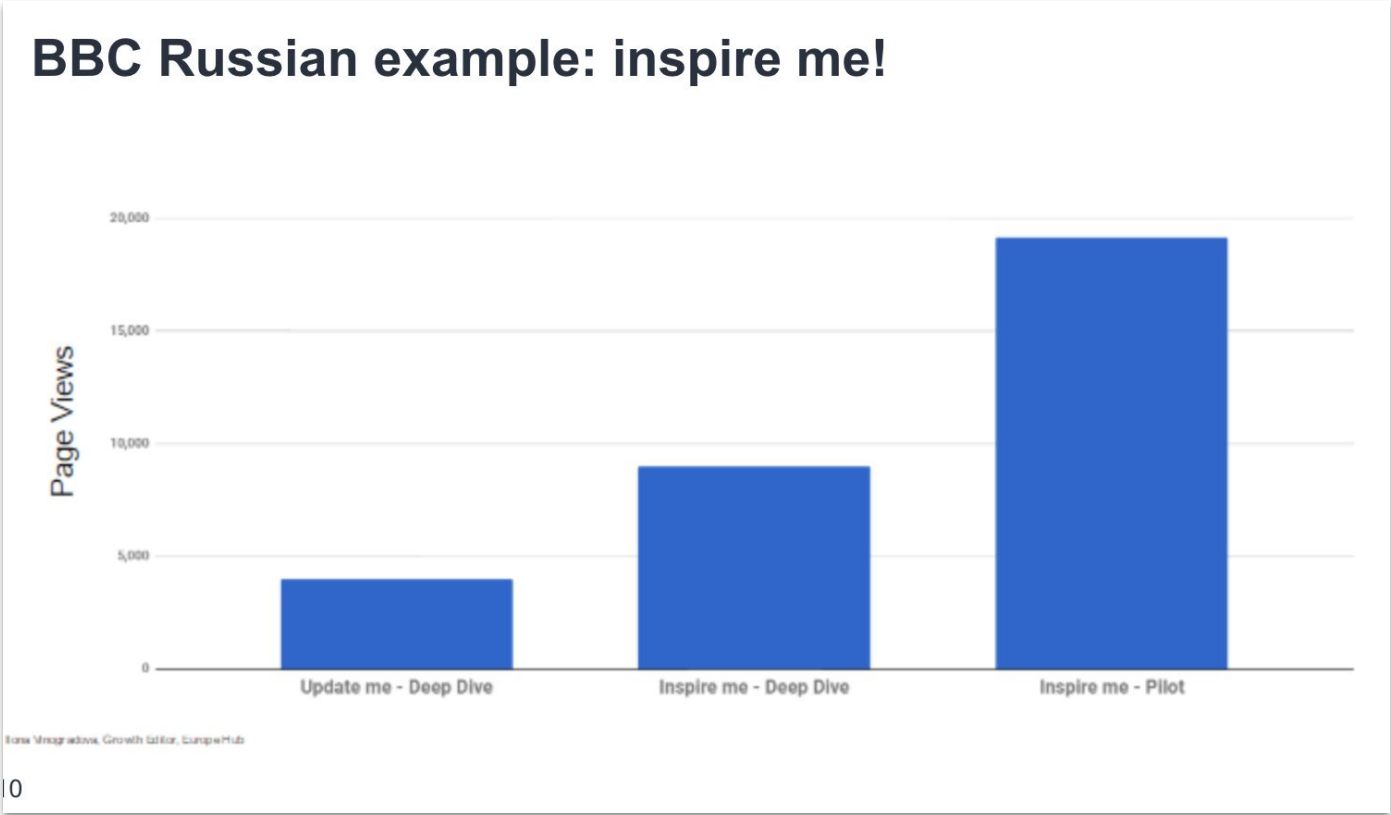
User needs approach to doing news - a classic BBC case study



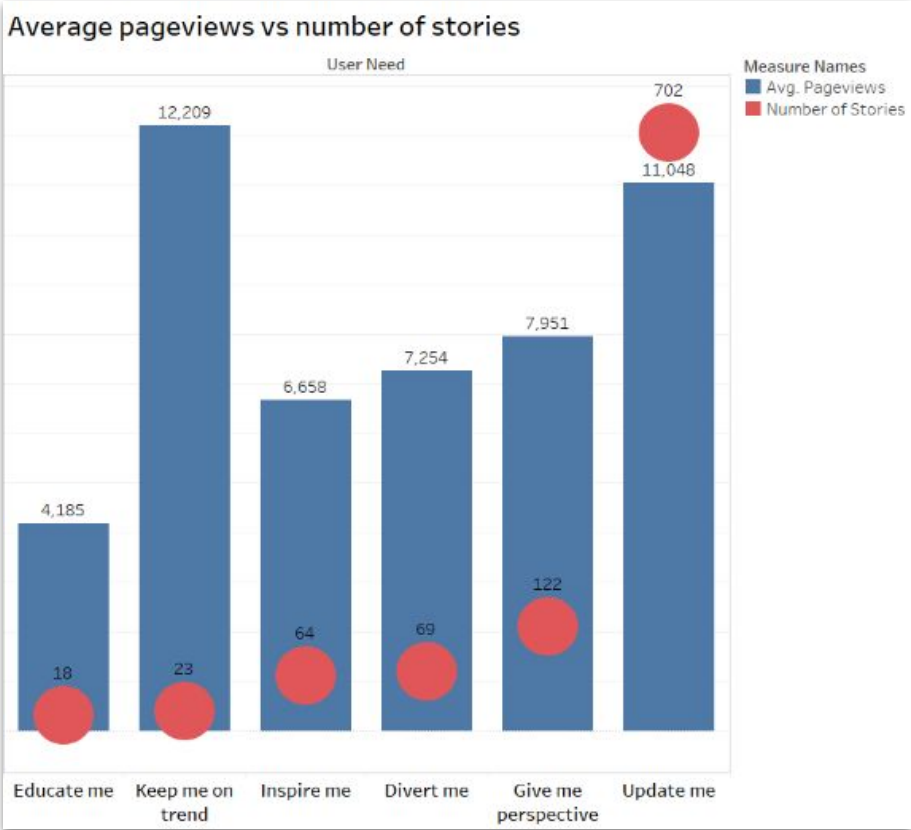
70% of stories are 'Update Me' but bring only 7% of page views

Newsroom was producing content the audience did not need (in these volumes)

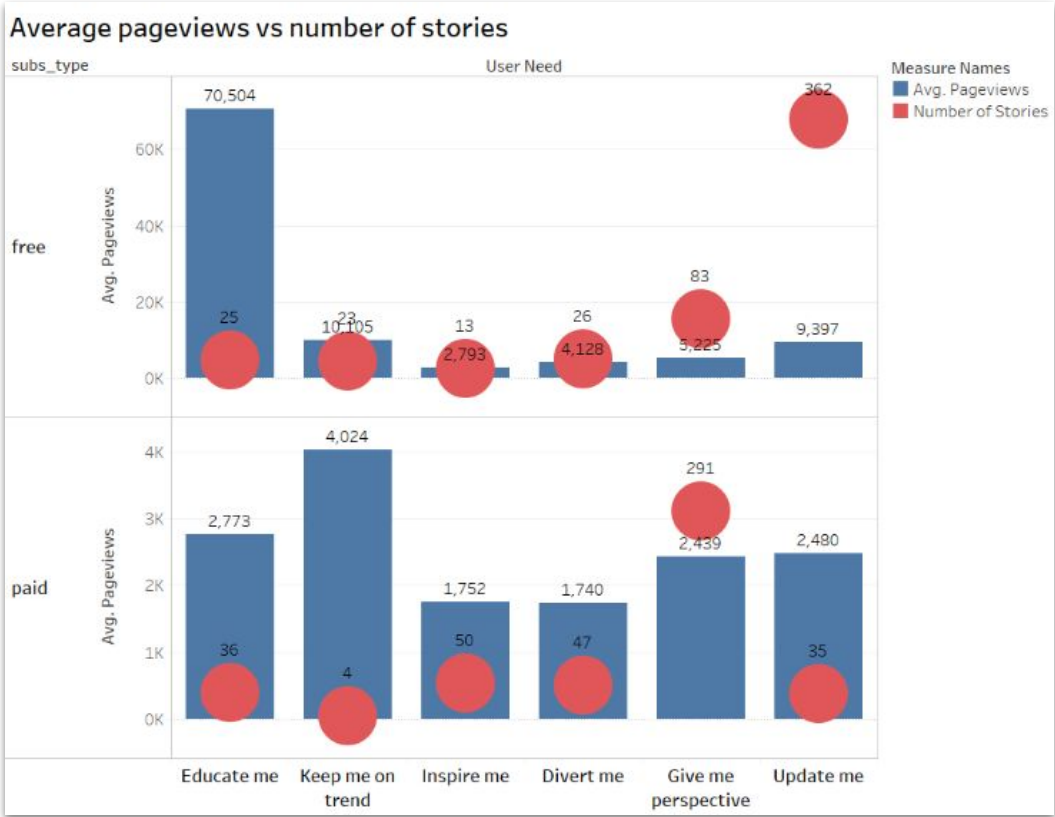
'Inspire me' growth hack delivered great results



User needs approach to doing news - a regional publisher



User needs approach to doing news - a national publisher



User needs = your own list or priorities

Update me

Give me perspective

Keep me on trend

Personal stories

Comments and interaction

Experts' opinions

Inspire me

Divert me

Educate me

Impact on daily life

Shareable

Surprising perspective

User needs are universal and specific, do you know yours?

| User need/ Outlet | BBC | WSJ | Vogue Int | TRT | | Omroep Brabant |
|----------------------|-----|--------------------|---------------------|-------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| Update me | + | + | + | + | | + |
| Keep me on trend | + | Connect me | - | FOMO | | + |
| Give me perspective | + | Help me understand | - | + Challenge me | | Give me perspective + Educate me |
| Educate me | + | Help me understand | + | + | | + |
| Inspire me | + | + | + | + | | + |
| Divert me | + | Entertain me | + | Move me | | + |
| Additional one | N/a | N/a | Make me responsible | N/a | | Make me feel connected to my locality |

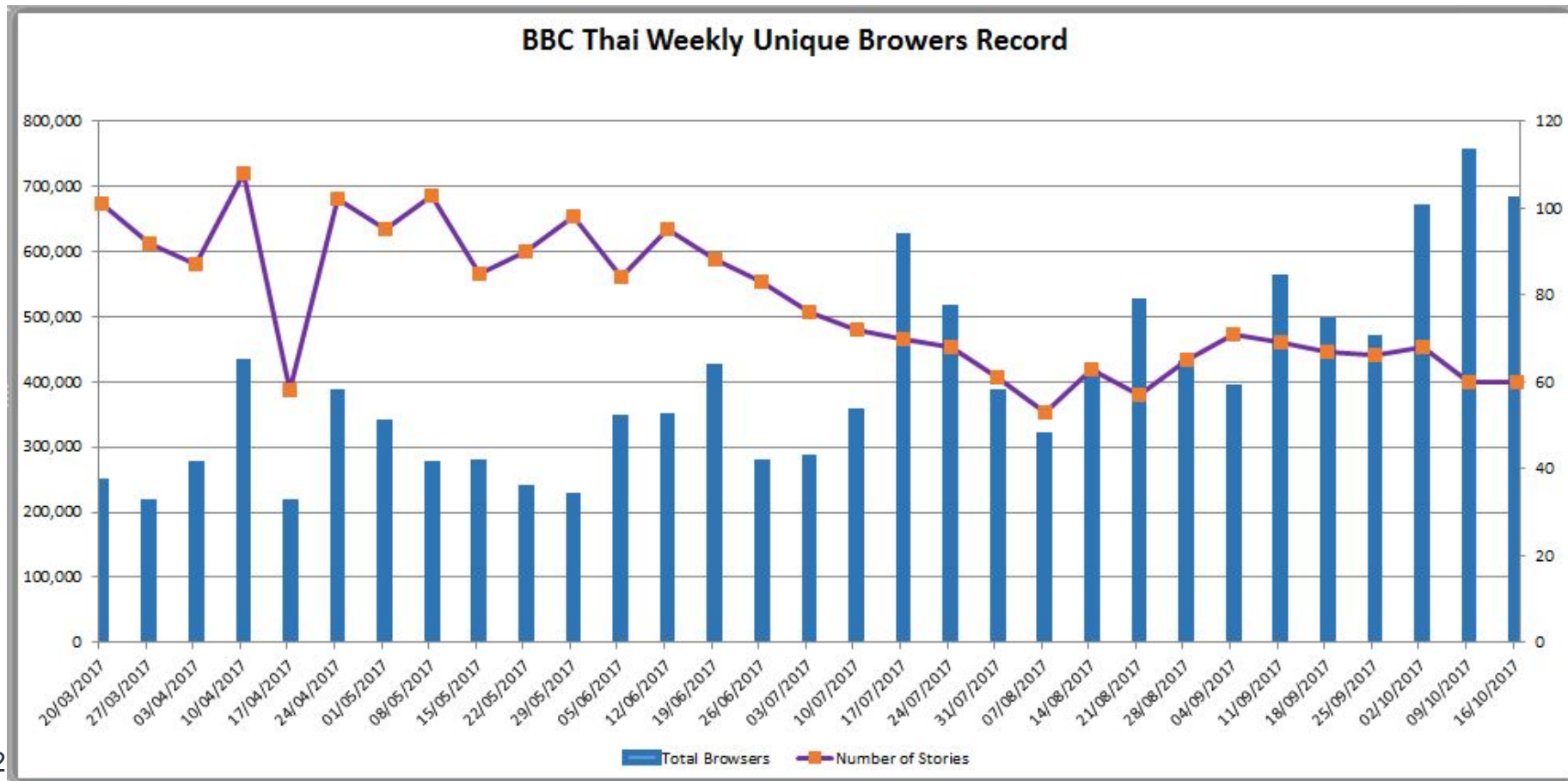
User needs model fully connects content and product



Content is Product and Product is Content: why deeper alignment is the only way forward

- Audience expectations for both content and product have never been higher
- Finding your product market fit, your unique niche = USP
- Tagging with user needs in CMS enables 'deep dives, identifies blind spots
- Allows to experiment with formats/user needs/ genres
- Leads to output optimisation - weekly articles down, engagement up

BBC Thai example: do less – better!



User needs = your audience's own list of priorities

... 75% of output brings only 12% of pageviews ...

... 'Educate me' is the least used user needs, but it has the highest % of loyal readers ...

... 'Give me perspective' pieces generate the highest engagement off-site ...

... Logged in users love 'Inspire me' articles, and read depth of these articles is the highest across the site ...

... Certain sections could do with not producing 'Update me articles' at all - the value is in other user needs ...

Learn more about them

how to write an **'update me'** article

Dec. 22, 2020 by Jacqueline Woudstra

update me, user needs, update me

A graphic featuring a red megaphone on the left and a target with a red arrow hitting the bullseye on the right, set against a dark red background.

how to write a **'keep me on trend'** article

Dec. 8, 2020 by Jacqueline Woudstra

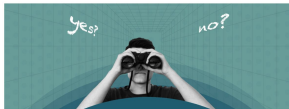
keep me on trend, triple n, user needs

A graphic showing a hand holding a smartphone in the center, with green and purple trend lines and arrows pointing upwards and to the right, set against a pink background.

how to write a **'give me perspective'** article

Dec. 22, 2020 by Jacqueline Woudstra

give me perspective, triple n, user needs

A graphic of a person wearing binoculars, looking out over a landscape. The words "yes?" and "no?" are written in the sky above them.

how to write an **'educate me'** article

Dec. 2, 2020 by Jacqueline Woudstra

educate me, triple n, user needs

A graphic showing a hand holding a glowing lightbulb above a stack of books, set against a green background.

how to write an **'inspire me'** article

Dec. 15, 2020 by Jacqueline Woudstra


inspire me, triple n, user needs

A graphic featuring a collage of images: a female athlete, a person with a yellow star over their eyes, and a person reading a newspaper, set against a blue background.

how to write a **'divert me'** article

Jan. 8, 2021 by Jacqueline Woudstra

divert me, triple n, user needs

A graphic showing a person reading a newspaper, surrounded by several yellow smiley face emojis, set against a dark purple background.

Thank you for your attention!
Get in touch, I can help your newsroom

19 May 2021
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Content, Transformation, Innovation