

INSIGHTS INTO
**USER HABITS &
SUBSCRIPTION
TRENDS**
AMONG
CROATIAN
NEWS
READERS

RESEARCH BY



INTRODUCTION

In August 2024, a survey was conducted among Croatian digital publishers, in particular, members of HUDI, in order to explore user and subscriber trends in the Croatian digital market. **The survey was distributed across various news portals and gathered responses from 961 participants.** It aimed to understand socio-demographic characteristics, user behaviors and subscription preferences of Croatian readers, **in order to provide valuable insights into the evolving digital landscape in Croatia.**

961

PARTICIPANTS SURVEY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Readers and their habits
2. Subscribers
3. Unpaid users or non-subscribers
4. Key findings





AUDIENCE BREAKDOWN BY AGE AND GENDER

AGE BREAKDOWN:

- Generation X (44-59): **42.5%**
- Millennials (28-43): **31.7%**
- Baby Boomers (60-78): **20.1%**
- Gen Z (12-27): **5.7%** (underrepresented, potentially favoring social media)

Baby Boomers and older generations are active but at a lower rate compared to younger groups.

GENDER BREAKDOWN:

- Male: **66.4%**
- Female: **33.6%**

This male-dominant skew suggests that men might be more engaged in the content or platforms surveyed.

AGE BREAKDOWN

Gen Z (12-27)



5,7%

Millennials (28-43)



31,7%

Gen X (44-59)



42,5%

Baby Boomers (60-78)

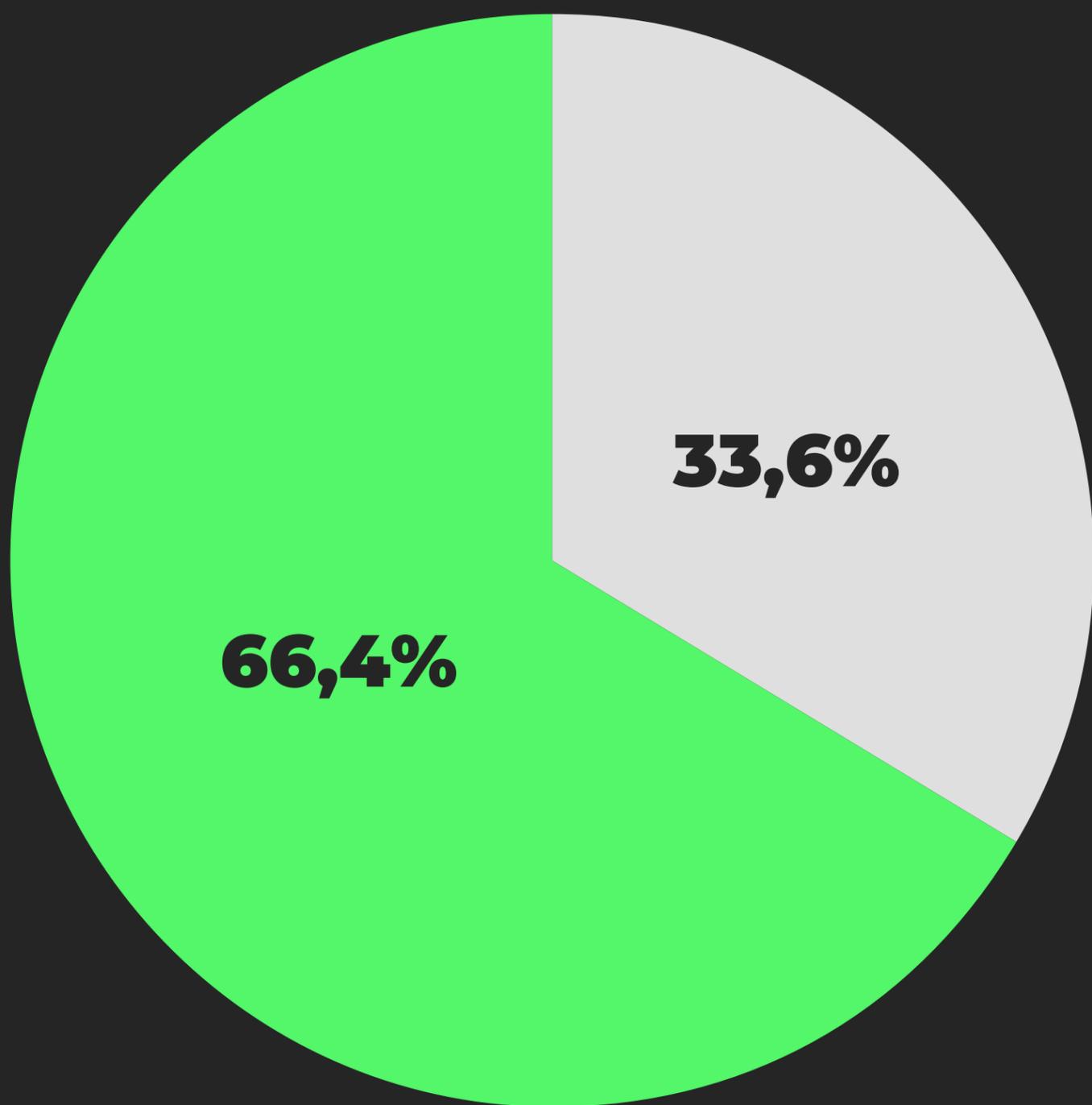


20,1%

GENDER

● Male

● Female



READING HABITS

This data reflects a highly engaged audience when it comes to online news consumption. The overwhelming majority of respondents **(85.7%) read news several times a day**, indicating a strong habit of staying updated in real-time. Another **10.7% read news once a day**, which further emphasizes regular news consumption.

The small percentages for less frequent reading - 3.0% several times a week and even smaller for once a week or less—suggest that online news has become an integral part of daily life for most respondents.

This could point to the need for publishers to maintain a constant stream of updated content to cater to this highly frequent usage pattern.

DO YOU HAVE A REGISTERED USER ACCOUNT ON ANY NEWS PORTAL?

Yes **41,8%**

- Croatian 36,2%
- International 14,6%

No **58,2%**

● Yes ● No



A hand holding a smartphone over a laptop keyboard. A green light effect emanates from the phone. The text '240' is overlaid in a large, white, outlined font.

240

SUBSCRIBERS

The results indicate a clear preference for subscribing to local (Croatian) portals over international ones:

- **28.8%** of respondents subscribed to Croatian portals
- **13.0%** subscribed to international portals

This difference could be attributed to factors such as language, cultural relevance, or pricing. Croatian portals might offer more affordable or better-suited subscription packages for local users, while international portals, often in English, may not align as closely with their everyday news consumption habits.

However, the fact that 13.0% still subscribe to international portals, shows that a portion of the audience seeks broader, global perspectives or access to specific international content.

SUBSCRIBERS



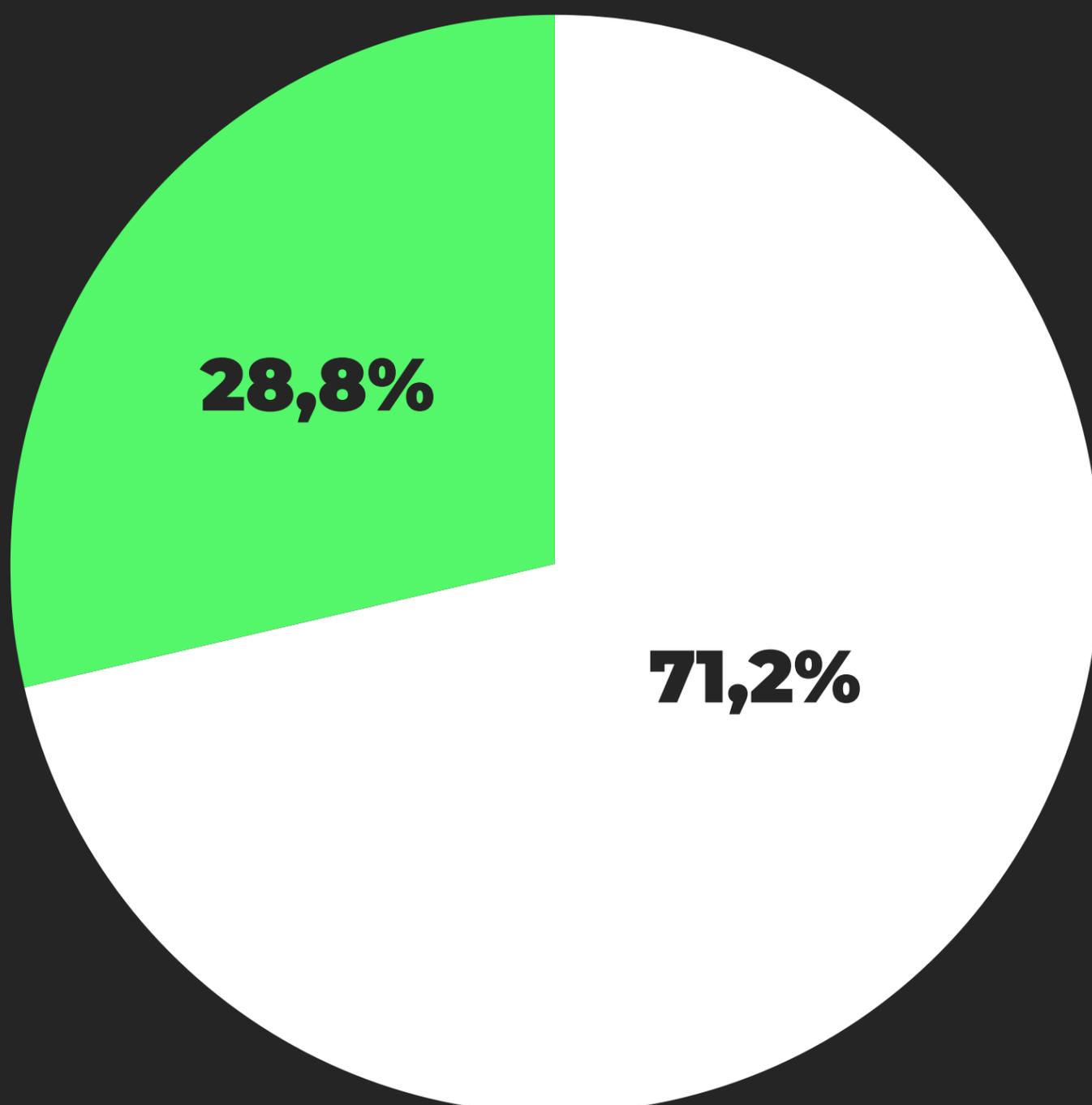
Are you currently subscribed to any Croatian news portals?



Yes



No





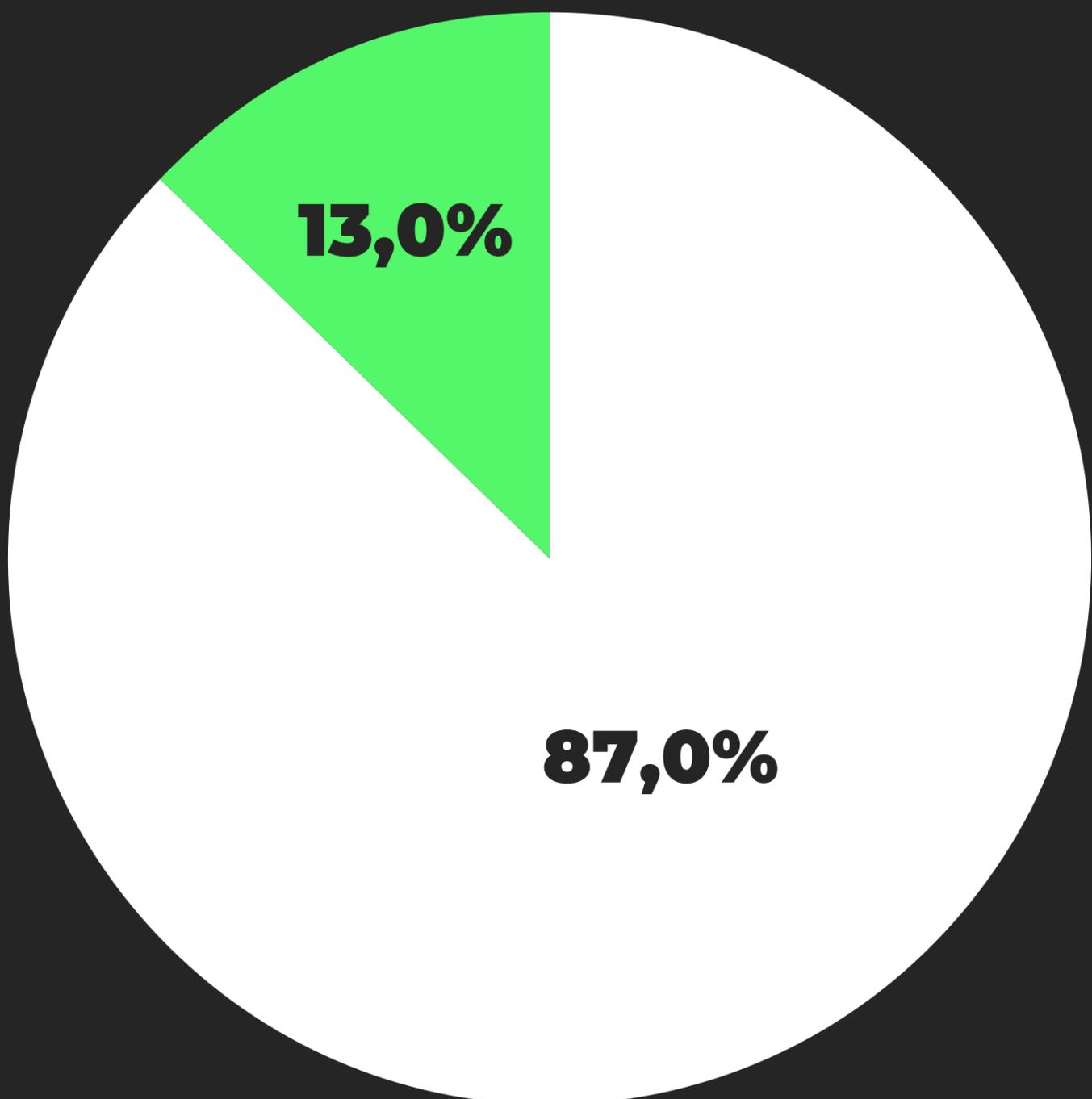
Are you crrently subscribed to any international news portals?



Yes



No



SUBSCRIBERS AND THEIR READING HABITS

The data shows that a large majority of respondents **63.5%** use their digital subscriptions to Croatian portals several times a day, indicating high engagement with locked content.

An additional **16.6%** use their subscription once a day, further reinforcing the idea that a significant portion of users incorporate reading locked articles into their daily routine.

The next group, **12.3%**, reads locked content several times a week, while smaller percentages (**3.6%** once a week and **4.0%** less frequently) show that there is still a segment of users who engage with premium content less often.

Overall, this breakdown highlights that most users are highly active in consuming locked content, while a smaller group uses it more sporadically. For publishers, these insights could be useful for tailoring subscription offerings and increasing engagement among less frequent users.

SUBSCRIBERS AND THEIR READING HABITS



How often do you use your digital subscription to Croatian portals, i.e., read locked articles?

Several times a day



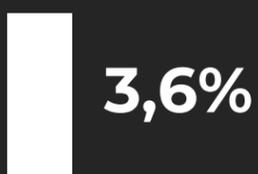
Once a day



Several times a week



Once a week



Less frequently



Never



SUBSCRIBERS AND PREFERRED CONTENT

The results indicate that respondents primarily use their digital subscriptions on Croatian portals to stay informed about key topics of national and global significance.

- The largest proportion of respondents **(70.0%)** focus on daily national news,
- Foreign and domestic politics **(63.5%)** is another major area of interest,
- Daily international news **(67.9%)** also captures significant attention,
- Finally, economy and business **(56.3%)**

These results demonstrate that subscribers value news that directly affects their personal, professional, and civic lives, with a focus on a mix of domestic, international, political, and economic content. Publishers can use this information to prioritize and promote content that aligns with these interests.

Interestingly, the interest is quite evenly distributed, with no category significantly standing out over the others.

Daily nation news	70.0%
External and internal politics	67.9%
Daily international news	63.5%
Economy & Business	56.3%
Science and Education	50.2%
Technology	45.8%
Money and Finance	43.3%
Travel	39.0%
Sport	38.3%
Culture	35.4%
Food	31.8%
Crime news	31.0%
Home Design	28.2%
Auto Moto	24.5%
Lifestyle	24.5%
Healthy Lifestyle	24.5%
Showbiz	14.8%
Agriculture & Gardening	14.8%
Pets	14.4%
Fashion	10.5%
Religion and Country	8.7%
Beauty	7.6%
Gaming	6.1%
Children and Babies	4.0%
Other	0.8%

SUBSCRIBERS AND SATISFACTION

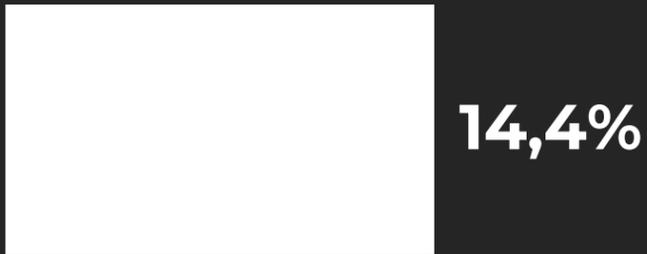
The satisfaction level, with a mean of 3.5, indicates that respondents are moderately satisfied with the value they receive from their digital subscriptions to Croatian portals. Since the scale from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied), **a mean score of 3.5 suggests that, on average, users find the service satisfactory but not outstanding.**

The results point to a generally positive but not overwhelmingly strong perception of value, suggesting room for improvement in the offerings or user experience to raise overall satisfaction levels.

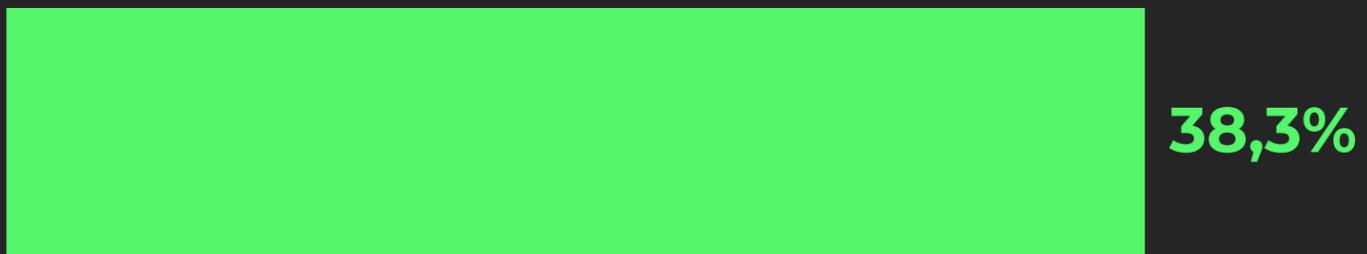


How satisfied are you with the value you receive from your digital subscriptions to Croatian portals?

Very satisfied



Somewhat satisfied



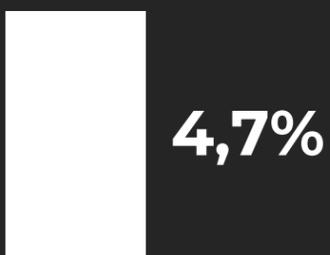
Neutral



Somewhat dissatisfied



Very dissatisfied



SUBSCRIBERS AND FACTORS TO SUBSCRIBE

These results highlight the key factors that influence users' decisions to subscribe to digital services on Croatian portals.

- 1. Content quality (75.5%)** is the most important factor, showing that users place a high value on well-researched, insightful, and relevant articles. This suggests that high-quality journalism is important in convincing people to pay for a subscription.
- 2. Price (43.3%)** is also a significant consideration, as affordability remains a key concern for many users. Even if the content is valuable, users may be hesitant to subscribe if they perceive the price as too high.
- 3. Article authors (39.4%)** are important to some respondents, indicating that the reputation and credibility of individual writers can influence the decision to subscribe. This highlights the role of trusted and well-known journalists in attracting paying readers.
- 4. Fewer ads (37.9%)** is another factor, showing that users appreciate a cleaner, less distracting reading experience. Reducing ad clutter could enhance the perceived value of a subscription.

Overall, these findings suggest that users prioritize quality and affordability when choosing to subscribe, while the reputation of authors and a better user experience (fewer ads) also play important roles.

Interestingly, **the brand (7.5%) didn't turn out to be an important factor** that influences users' decision to subscribe.

WERE YOU SUBSCRIBED BEFORE?

The data shows that only **10.4%** of respondents have previously subscribed to Croatian portals, while a large majority, **89.6%**, have never subscribed. This suggests that digital subscriptions to Croatian portals have low penetration among the audience.

Several factors could explain this:

- 1. Free content availability:** Many users may rely on free access to news and articles, which reduces the perceived need for a paid subscription.
- 2. Lack of perceived value:** Users might not feel that the exclusive content offered through subscriptions provides enough additional value to justify the cost.
- 3. Limited awareness or interest:** Some users may not be aware of subscription options or simply don't prioritize paying for news, opting instead for alternative free sources.

This data points to a potential growth area for Croatian portals if they can better communicate the value of their subscriptions and create incentives that appeal to a broader audience.



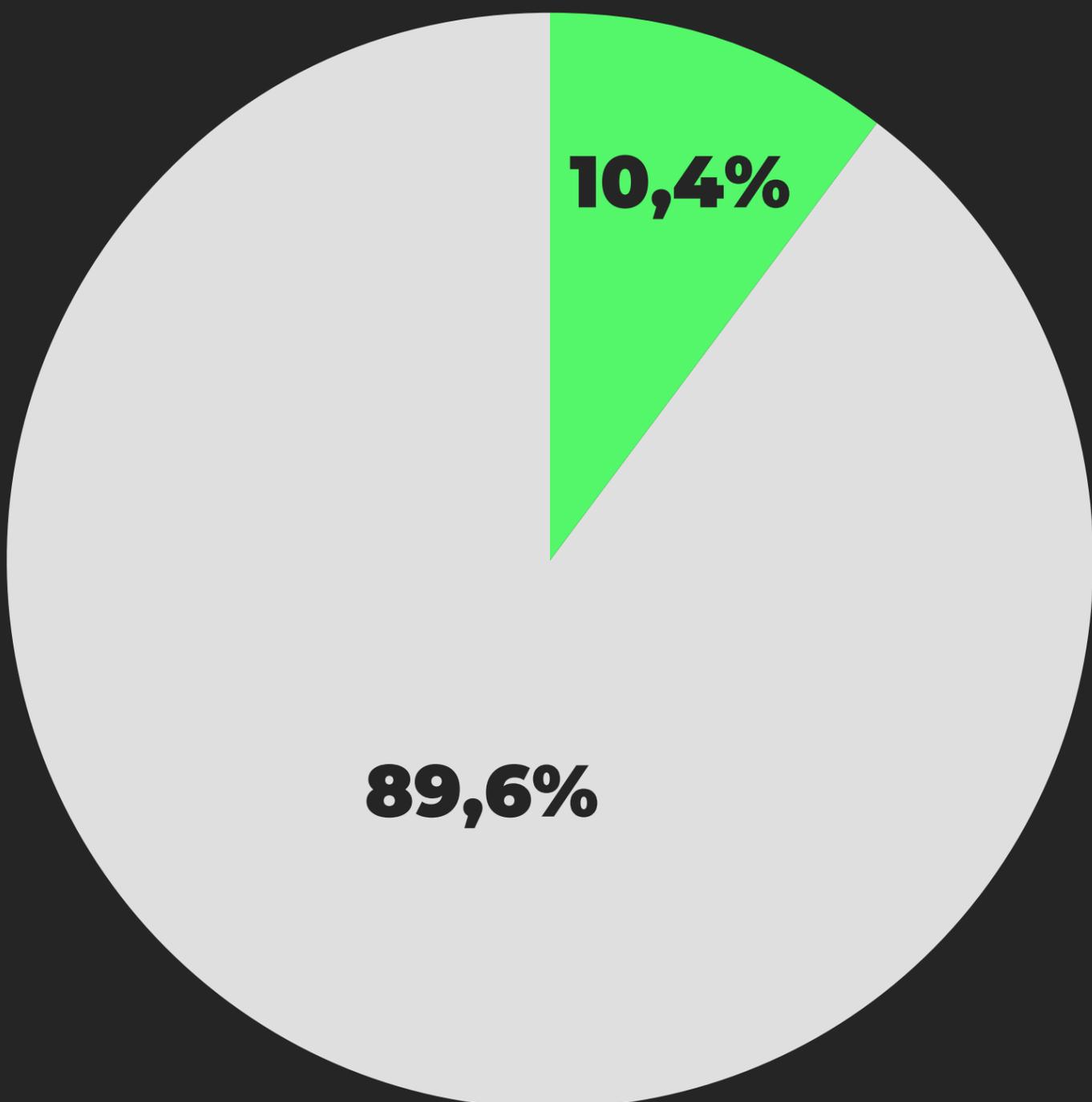
Have you previously been subscribed to any Croatian portals?



Yes



No



50

UNPAID USERS OR NON-SUBSCRIBERS



Do you have a registered user account on any news portal?

Yes

- Croatian
- International

41,8%

36,2%

14,6%

No

58,2%



Yes



No



UNPAID USERS AND PREFERRED CONTENT

The data shows that the majority of users on Croatian news portals prioritize the following types of content:

- 1. Daily National News (76.8%)**
- 2. Daily International News (72.0%)**
- 3. Foreign and Domestic Politics (67.9%)**

Overall, the preferences highlight the importance of delivering a balanced mix of local and global news, along with detailed political content, to effectively engage the audience.

Interestingly, the interest is quite evenly distributed, with no category significantly standing out over the others.

Daily nation news	76.8%
Daily international news	72.0%
External and internal politics	67.9%
Economy & Business	54.8%
Science and Education	54.5%
Technology	45.0%
Sport	42.4%
Money and Finance	40.2%
Culture	39.7%
Travel	35.0%
Food	34.6%
Healthy Lifestyle	29.2%
Home Design	29.0%
Crime news	24.5%
Auto Moto	21.8%
Agriculture & Gardening	19.5%
Lifestyle	18.5%
Pets	17.7%
Religion and Country	15.7%
Showbiz	12.6%
Fashion	11.4%
Beauty	10.6%
Gaming	8.1%
Children and Babies	4.3%
Other	2.0%

FACTORS TO SUBSCRIBE

The results highlight the key factors influencing users' decisions when considering a digital subscription to Croatian new portals:

1. Content Quality (79.0%): Similar to what subscribers indicated, the most important factor for the majority of respondents is the quality of content. This indicates that users are primarily interested in subscribing to services that offer high-value, reliable, and well-researched content. If the content is perceived as premium or superior to free alternatives, users are more likely to subscribe.

2. Price (49.6%): Again, affordability is the second most important factor. This suggests that while users value high-quality content, they are also sensitive to pricing. Offering competitive subscription rates or demonstrating clear value for the cost is crucial for attracting and retaining subscribers.

3. Fewer Ads (43.8%): A significant portion of respondents value a reduced ad experience. Even with a subscription, users prefer an ad-light or ad-free experience. This means that offering fewer ads or an ad-free subscription tier could enhance user satisfaction and make the service more appealing.

In summary, to attract more subscribers, Croatian portals should focus on delivering **high-quality content**, offering reasonable prices, and minimizing advertisements in their digital services. These factors directly impact users' decision-making when considering whether to pay for a subscription, therefore also resembling what subscribers perceive as influencing factors.

ATTRACTIVE TYPES OF SUBSCRIPTIONS

This data shows respondents' preferences for different types of digital subscription plans on Croatian portals, with a clear emphasis on saving money:

1. Annual Subscriptions (56.2%): The majority of users prefer annual plans because they offer the cheapest price and the greatest overall savings. This indicates that users are willing to commit to a long-term plan in exchange for a lower cost per month.

2. Monthly Subscriptions (31.1%): Monthly subscriptions are the second most popular choice, likely because they strike a balance between affordability and flexibility.

3. Weekly Subscriptions (1.5%): Very few respondents chose weekly subscriptions, which offer only moderate savings. This low preference suggests that weekly plans may not provide enough value or convenience to users.

4. Daily Subscriptions (0.7%): Daily subscriptions are the least popular, perceived as expensive with minimal savings.

5. Pay-Per-Article (10.5%): A notable percentage prefers paying per article, despite it being the most expensive option with the least savings. This model likely appeals to occasional readers who don't consume enough content to justify a full subscription.

For Croatian portals, offering flexible, value-driven plans like annual or monthly subscriptions may be the best approach to attract and retain subscribers.



What type of subscription for digital services on Croatian news portals do you prefer?

Annual subscriptions – biggest savings



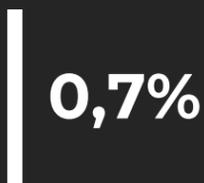
Monthly subscriptions – greater savings



Weekly subscriptions – moderate savings



Daily subscriptions – less savings



Pay-per-article – least savings





KEY FINDINGS

Based on the data provided, several key insights emerge regarding user and subscriber behavior in the Croatian digital market:

1. Strong Focus on Content Quality and Cost:

A significant portion of users prioritize content quality (79.0%) and affordability (49.6%) when considering a digital subscription. This highlights the importance of delivering high-value, well-produced content at a competitive price point to attract and retain subscribers.

2. Preference for Long-Term Subscriptions:

The majority of respondents prefer annual (56.2%) and monthly (31.1%) subscription models, emphasizing users' desire for cost savings. Shorter-term plans, such as weekly or daily subscriptions, are far less popular due to higher perceived costs and lower savings.

3. Mixed Perceptions on Subscription Value:

Despite the popularity of subscriptions, users remain neutral or slightly skeptical about whether paid content offers better value than free services. This suggests that publishers need to better communicate the benefits and exclusive value of their paid content to potential subscribers.

In conclusion, Croatian digital publishers should focus on enhancing the perceived value of their subscriptions by delivering high-quality content, offering competitive pricing, and minimizing ads.

To grow their subscriber base, especially among skeptical or non-subscribing users, publishers need to communicate more effectively the advantages of paid content over free

alternatives. Additionally, focusing on annual and monthly subscription models will likely yield the best results, given user preferences for long-term value and savings.

WAY FORWARD

Based on the survey data and analysis, here are several key recommendations for Croatian digital publishers to move forward:

1. Enhance Perceived Value of Paid Content

- **Exclusive Content:** Develop premium, exclusive content that cannot be accessed for free, such as in-depth investigative journalism, expert analysis, or multimedia features like podcasts and video series. This will help demonstrate the value of a subscription.
- **User Education:** Clearly communicate the benefits of paid content over free alternatives. Highlight features such as ad-free experiences, early access to stories, or unique insights from respected journalists.
- **Targeted Promotions:** Offer free trials, discounts, or bundled offers to encourage non-subscribers to try out premium content without immediate commitment.

2. Optimize Subscription Models

- **Focus on Long-Term Plans:** Since most users prefer annual or monthly subscriptions, promote these options more aggressively by offering discounts or additional perks (e.g., exclusive events, webinars) for long-term subscribers.
- **Flexible Payment Options:** While long-term plans are favored, consider offering more flexible payment models such as family or group plans, "pay per click" packages, or content bundles for niche interests (e.g., sports, politics).
- **Loyalty Programs:** Implement loyalty programs or rewards for long-term subscribers to retain users and reduce churn.

3. Improve User Experience and Personalization

- **Tailored Content:** Utilize data analytics to offer personalized content recommendations based on user preferences and reading habits. Providing customized news feeds can increase engagement and perceived value.
- **User Interface Enhancements:** Invest in improving website and app design to offer a smooth, user-friendly experience that encourages frequent use. Ensure the platform is optimized for mobile, given the increasing use of smartphones for news consumption.

4. Target Underserved Demographics

- **Engage Younger Audiences:** The relatively low engagement from younger demographics like Gen Z suggests a need for more interactive, multimedia content such as videos, podcasts, or even social media integration to capture their interest.
- **Develop strategies to attract more female users,** like diversifying content or creating a more inclusive platform experience.

5. Build Trust Through Transparency & Engagement

- **Journalist-Centric Approach:** Highlight the credibility and expertise of content creators, as 11.2% of respondents indicated that the reputation of authors matters in their decision to subscribe. Feature journalists prominently and offer insights into their work processes.
- **Community Engagement:** Foster user engagement through interactive features like live Q&A sessions, reader forums, and surveys. Building a community around the content can increase loyalty and keep users coming back.

6. Monitor and Adapt

- **Continuous Feedback:** Regularly survey subscribers and non-subscribers to gauge satisfaction and understand why users may be hesitant to subscribe. Use this feedback to make timely adjustments to content and subscription models.
- **Stay Competitive:** Keep an eye on trends in the global digital news market to ensure Croatian portals remain competitive. Explore partnerships, content licensing, or collaborations that can enhance content offerings and reach (joining local and international associations like HUDI, WAN-IFRA, NME, etc.)

CONCLUSION

By focusing on content quality, flexible subscription options, and improving the overall user experience, Croatian digital publishers can enhance the value of their subscriptions and attract a broader audience. Tailoring strategies to underserved demographics and engaging directly with users will further strengthen user loyalty and boost growth in the digital market.

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