

PULSAR\*



# Journalism as Brand Equity

How Audiences Perceive News Media  
Brands and their Journalism

# Journalism as Brand Equity for News Media Brands

The public [understands journalism is in a crisis](#) – one that is as much financial as of trust and confidence.

And yet –even though definitions of what ‘actual’ or ‘true’ journalism might vary– most global audiences still generally recognize journalism as an expensive, necessary practice that is useful for decision-making, and healthy for democracy and civic life.

Media companies involved in the news business know that a key part of their brand equity rests on their reputation for producing quality, reliable, uncompromising, unique, insightful journalism.

At a time of growing global skepticism and distrust of news media, in this study we aim to begin to explore just how closely audiences in the US & UK associate top news media brands with journalism, with a focus on the more positive associations audiences are expressing.

## Approach

### **Data Collection Period:**

June 13<sup>st</sup> – Oct 31<sup>st</sup> 2024

### **Channels:**

X, Blogs, Forums, Reddit, Facebook, Instagram, Threads, Blogs, YouTube, Tumblr, Dark Web and Online News

### **Markets/Languages:**

Global data collection  
Analysis collects all mentions across languages

### **Sources:**

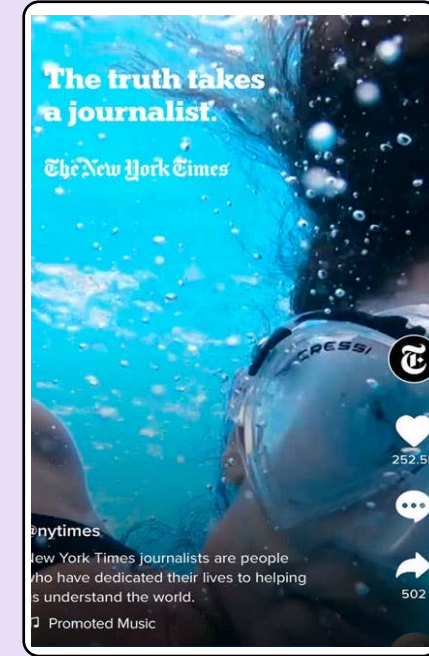
Pulsar TRAC

Audiense (Audience Intelligence data from X)

# Generalist news media organizations highlight the civic value of journalism

Besides financing journalism, news media organizations communicate this investment to their audiences and beyond, as it increases the value of their brand, helps sell subscriptions to their products, leads to more lucrative advertising, and drives influence and trust.

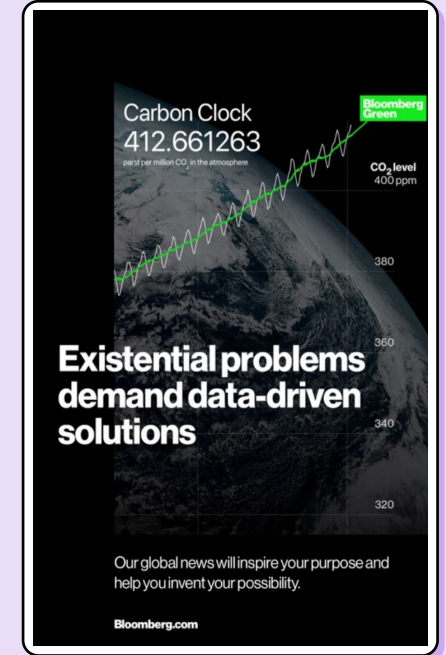
Across brand campaigns and branded touchpoints, generalist top tier news media brands often highlight the craft of journalism, as well as its benefits to society as a whole, leaning on concepts such as truth, democracy and storytelling.



Financial news media organizations anchor their brands to the value of insight & information in a complex world

Business news organizations have historically branded themselves as instruments to support decision-making.

Recent brand campaigns by financial news organizations highlight the value of context, sources, sense-making, context, and independence in an increasingly complex, accelerating world.

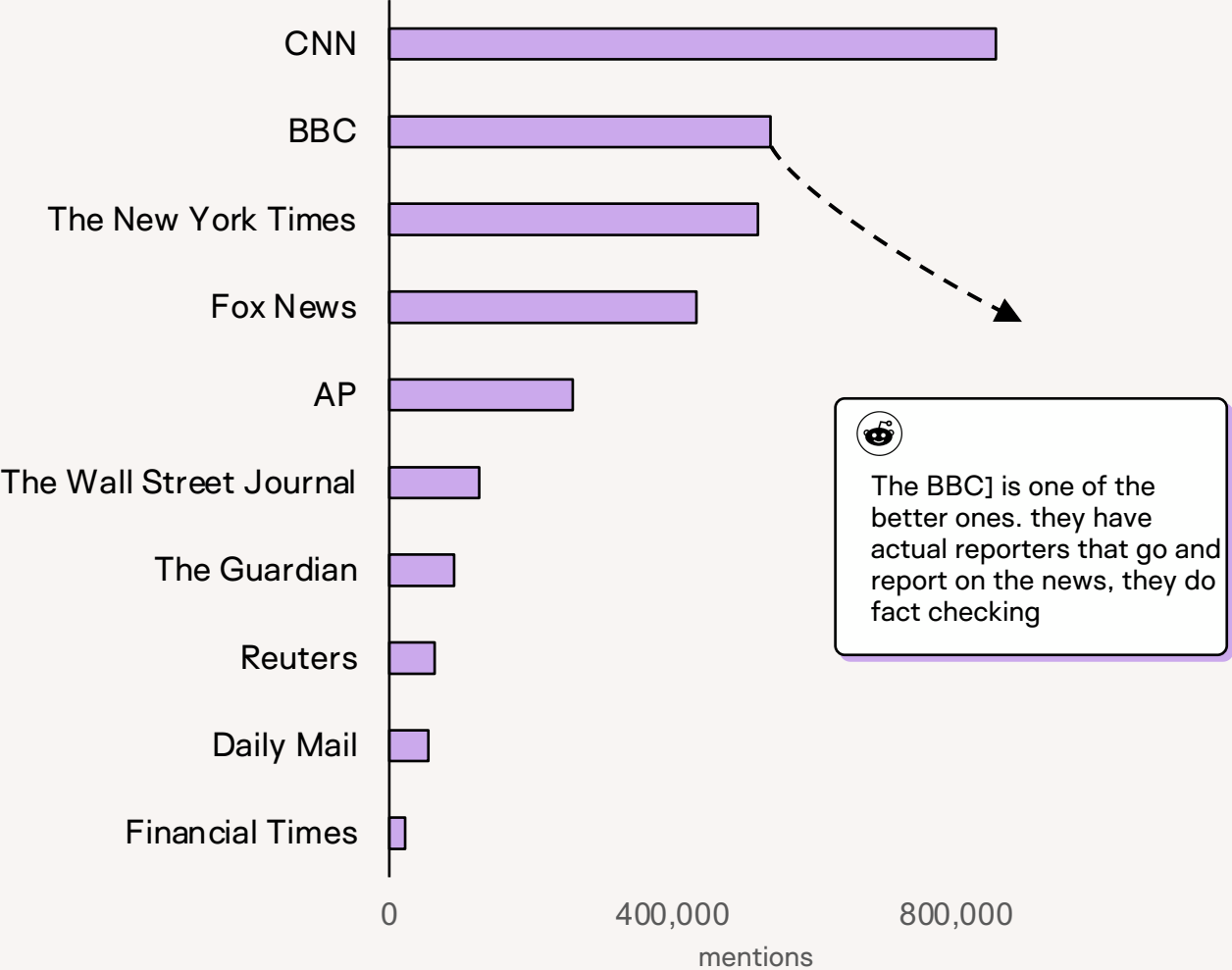


# Which global news media brands does the public most often associate with Journalism?

Broadcasters tend to be most often top of mind in relation to language relating to journalism, with CNN leading the pack, followed by the BBC and Fox News. This speaks to their large audiences and higher involvement in the electoral process globally in 2024.

The New York Times stands out as very often associated with journalism, as do newswires like The Associated Press and Reuters, which historically have tended to be less well-known by audiences.

Many of those association are often critical of the brand itself (see next slide): while this clearly is due to highly polarized societies during an election year, one must keep in mind that news media is (in part) in the feather-ruffling business and not all public criticism is hurtful to these brands.



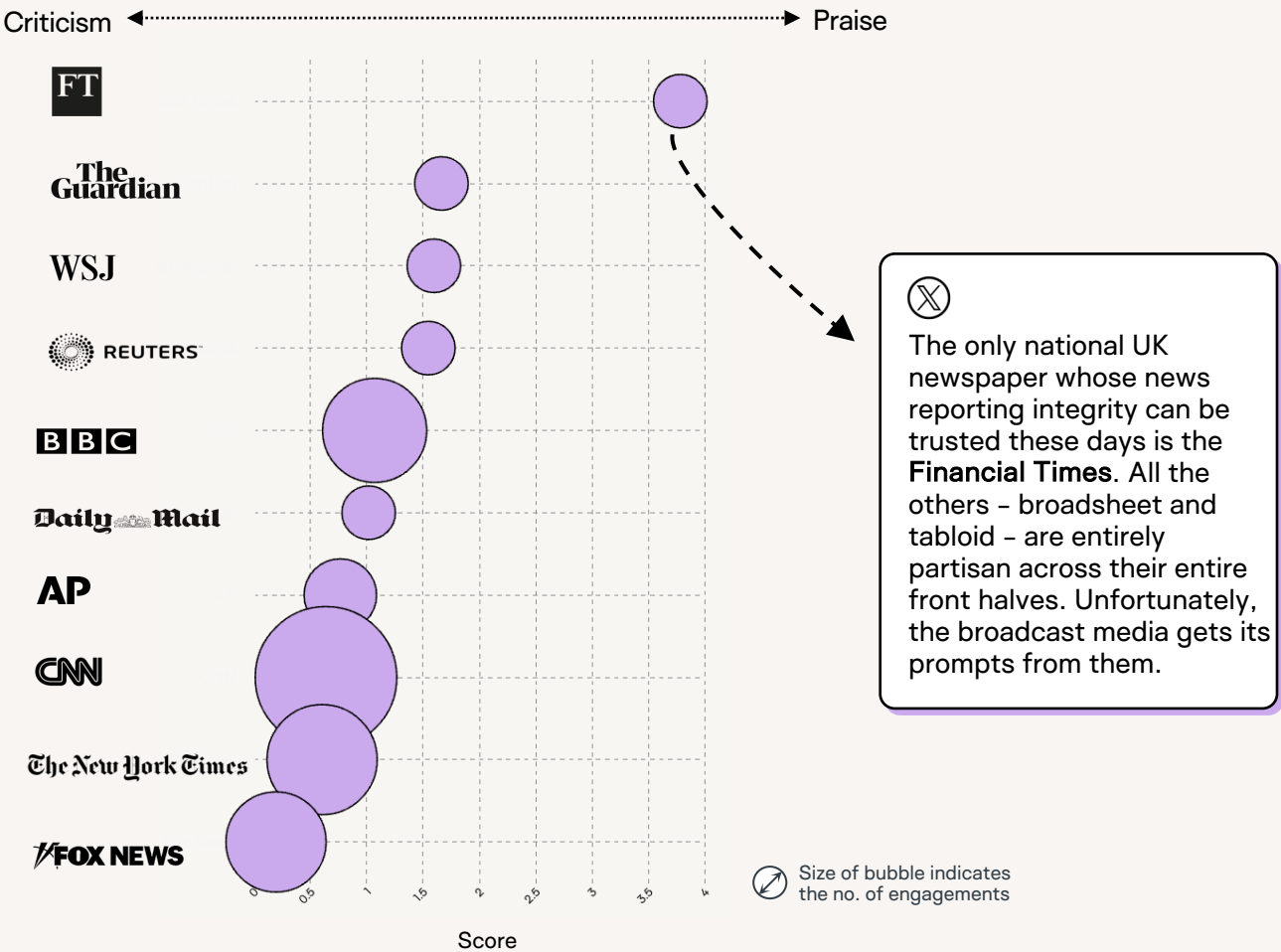
Volume of mentions of top media (selected according to online traffic or physical circulation in the case of paywalled business publications) in conjunction journalism in US and UK across X, Facebook, Instagram, Reddit, Threads, TikTok, Twitch, Blogs, YouTube, Forums, Tumblr, Dark We and more between June 13,- Oct 31, 2024. Source: Pulsar TRAC

# Broadcasters receive more criticism, financial outlets more praise for their journalism

Looking at this same data about association between news brands and journalism, this time through the lens of praise vs criticism, offers a different perspective.

Many elements affect where a publication falls on this spectrum: whether the publication is perceived as leaning one way or the other politically, which type of media (broadcasters faring the worst), how large and dominant they are perceived to be, and whether the news they offer is gated behind a subscription or not.

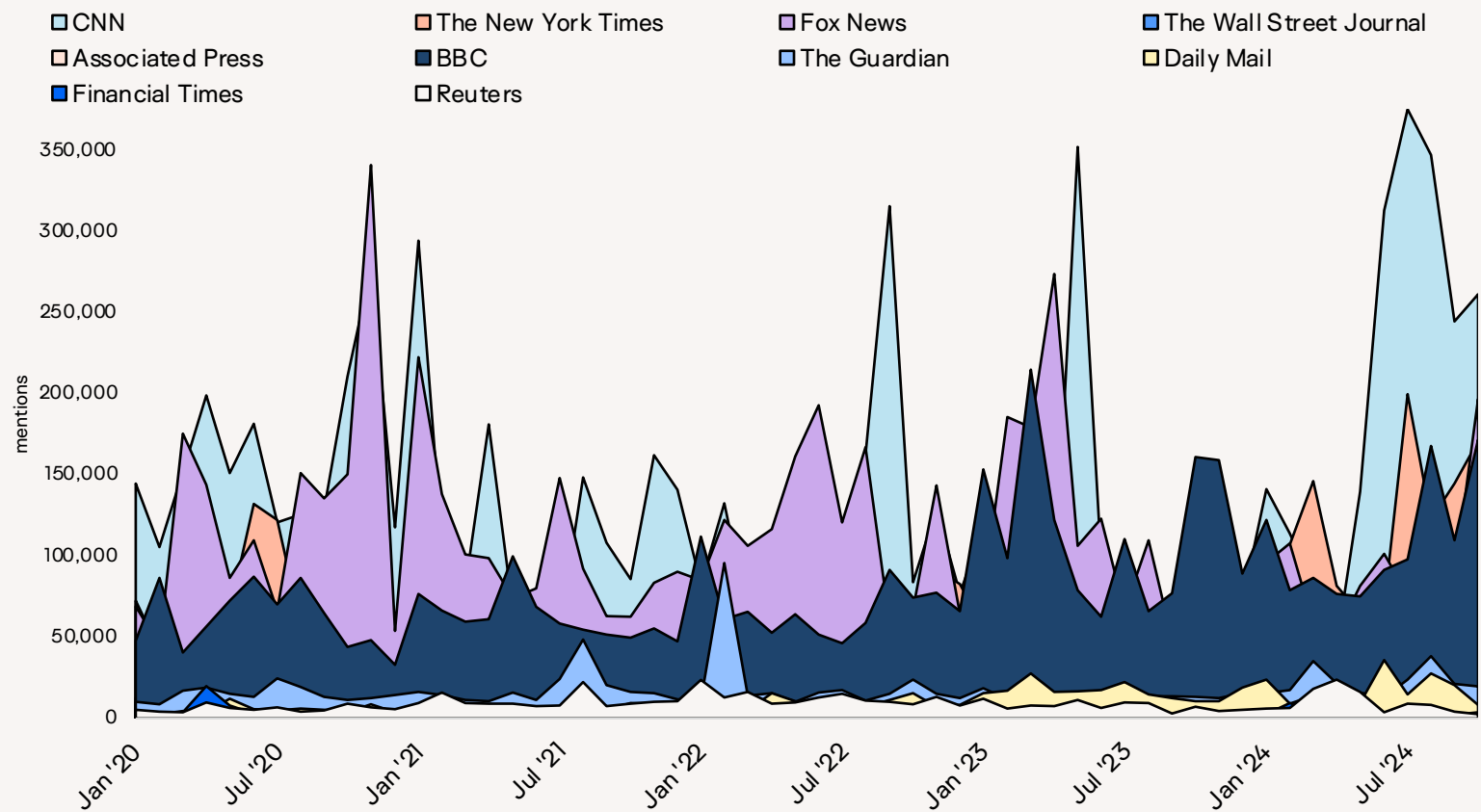
Leading the pack in terms of positive perception around its journalism is the Financial Times, thanks to a broad perception that it doesn't adopt strong political stances. Even more crucially, its audience is strongly and consistently defined, with a paywall, comparatively complex reporting, and a loyal reader base all contributing to a more contained, positive conversation.



News brand sentiment breakdown in the Journalism conversation across X, Facebook, TikTok, Online News, Tumblr, YouTube, Forums, Blog and more between June 13 – Oct 31, 2024. Source: Pulsar TRAC.  
\*Scores range from 0 (high criticism) to 4 (high praise), based on aggregated positive and negative brand mentions.

# When are media brands identified with journalism?

Clearly, this conversation is one impacted by moments in the news cycle. Notably, while the UK and US elections appear key drivers, the conversation tends to peak. in the months leading up to both, as audiences scan the media landscape for fairness



Volume of mentions of media brands globally on X between Jan 2020 and Sept 2024. Source: Pulsar TRENDS

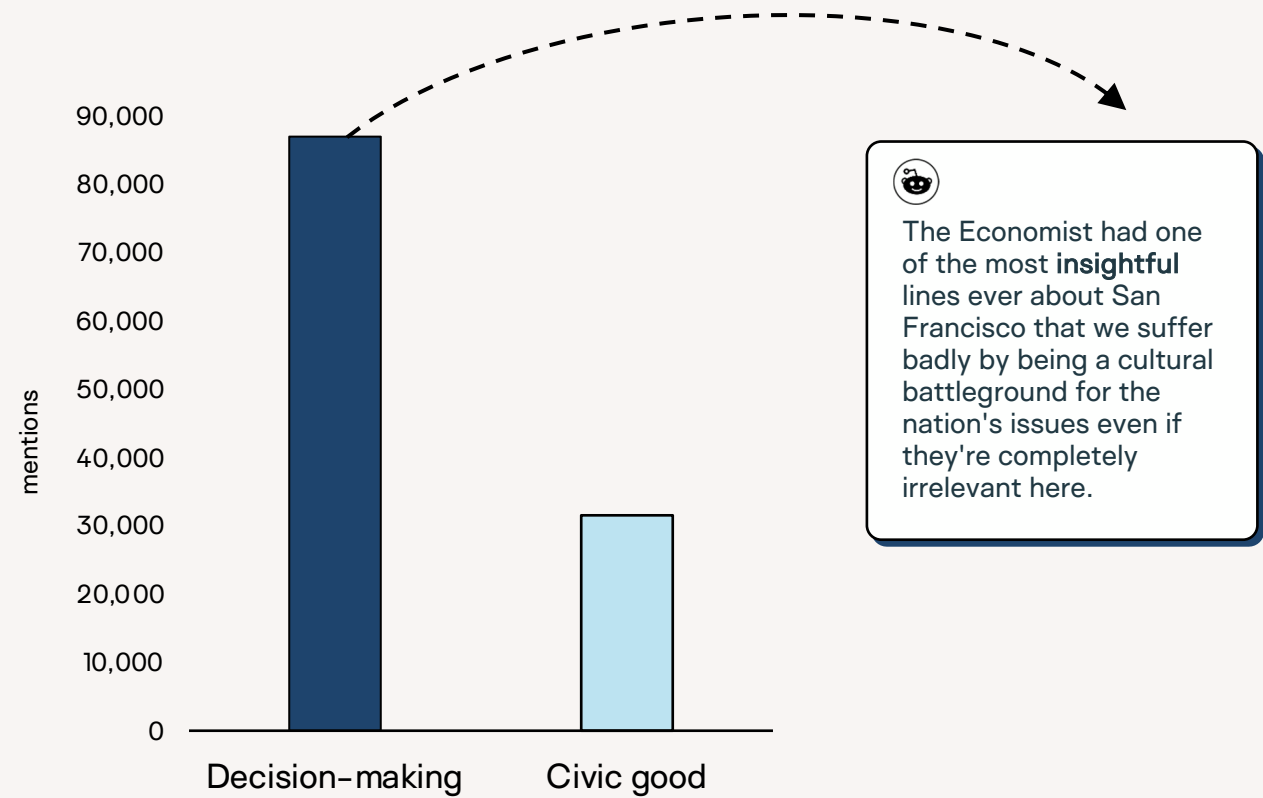


**What messages resonate  
with audiences?**



# What drives journalism brand equity for media brands?

Decision-making (providing insider information or insights) and civic good (holding power to account & informing the public) emerge consistently as arguments for journalism – and individual media brands. These can also be employed as sticks with which to bear the media brands who are falling short of public ideals.



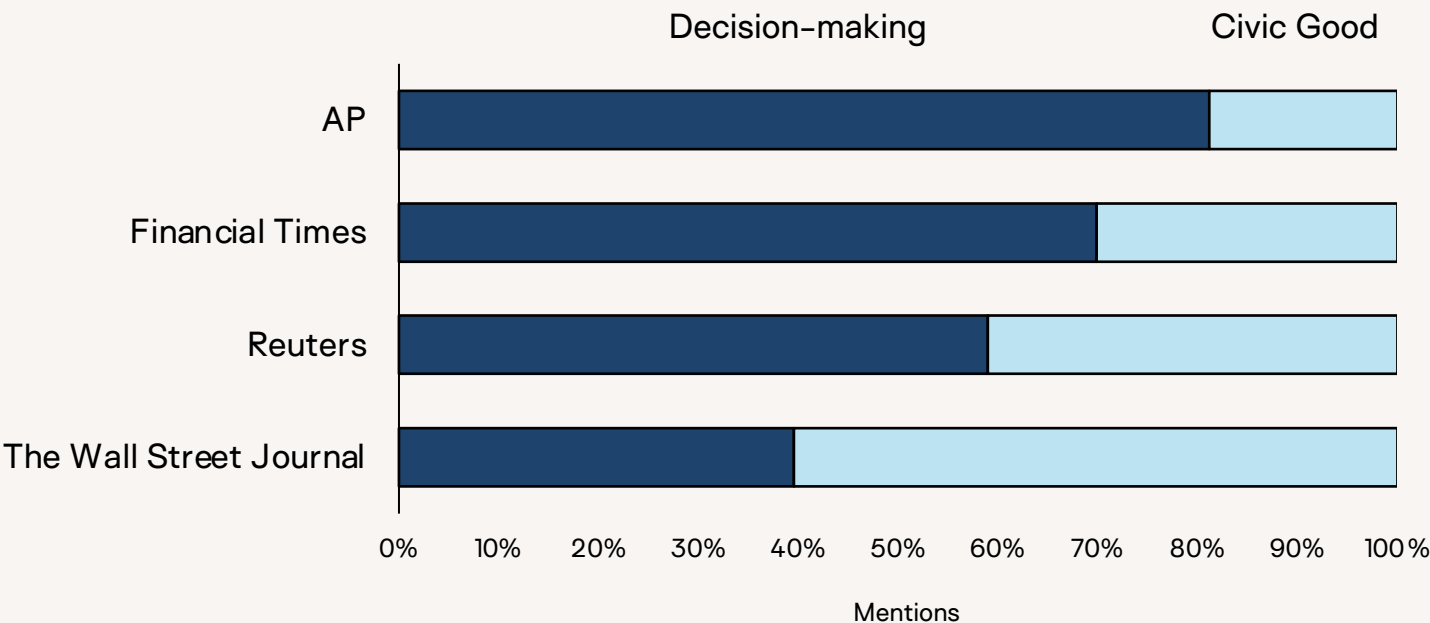
Top themes associated with the the most positively perceived news media brands across X, Facebook, Instagram, Reddit, Threads, TikTok, Twitch, Blogs, YouTube, Forums, Tumblr, Dark We and more between June 13 – Oct 31, 2024. Source: Pulsar TRAC

# Which brands are most identified with Civic Good & Decision-making?

As one would expect, newswires and business publications are more likely to be associated with decision-making (a value they often lean on in their brand campaigns). They also score

highly in terms of civic good, which is something that generalist media brands like the New York Times or CNN more often try to overtly embrace in their marketing: this is because, unlike

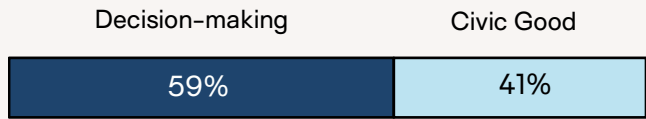
generalist media brands, they are perceived as being removed from the political fray, and less likely to sway public consensus.



Selected media brands by themes in the Journalism conversation across X, Facebook, Instagram, Reddit, Threads, TikTok, Twitch, Blogs, YouTube, Forums, Tumblr, Dark Web, and more between June 13 – Oct 31, 2024. Source: Pulsar TRAC

# Spotlight

## Reuters: “The Source”



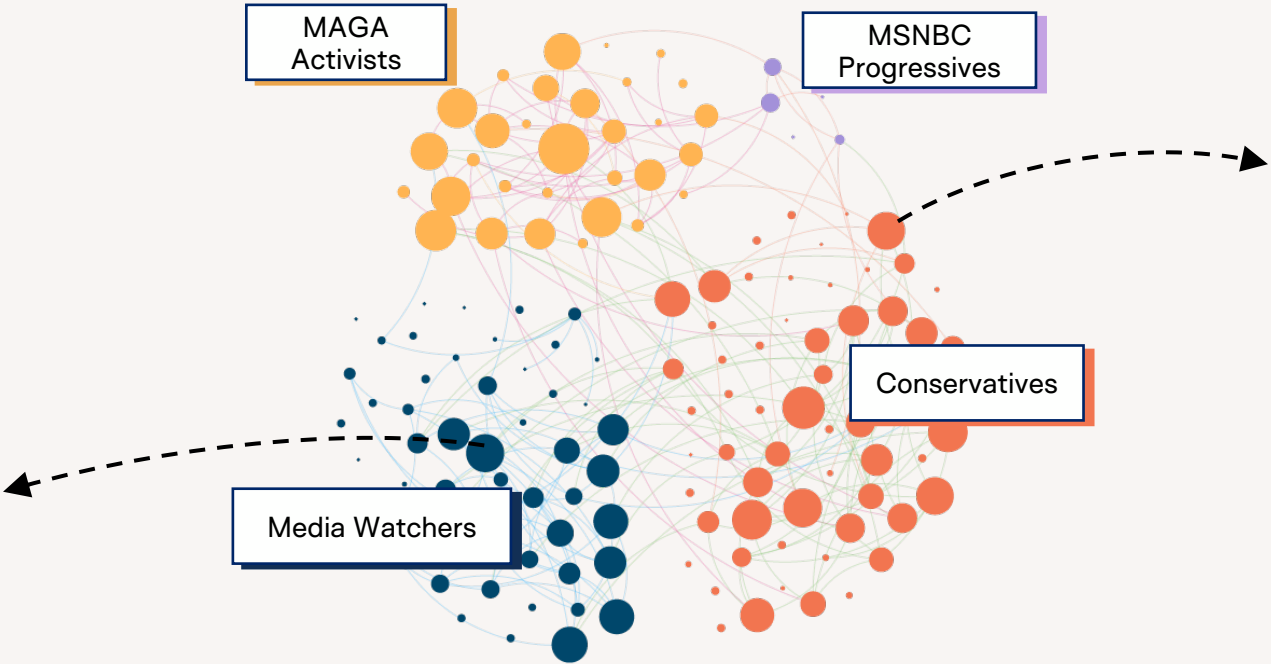
Reuters launched its first major global brand campaign in 2021 – in an attempt to position itself as ‘the source’.

Since then, the newswire has framed itself as where ‘the news gets the news’, telling all sides but taking none. Such a function can be vital for public discourse in an election year.

But the politicised nature of 2024 has also brought this claim under greater scrutiny – as reflected by the increasingly ideologically motivated communities discussing the brand’s journalism online.

ⓧ

Multiple investigations found that Reuters journalist Issam Abdallah was targeted & killed by the Israel in Lebanon, a year ago today, less than a week after Oct 7th. There was no Hamas or Hezbollah, no 'human shields', no mistake, just the cold-blooded murder of a journalist



ⓧ

Reuters is reporting polled suburbanite voters favor Harris over Trump. They state that she is gaining support from the middle class, which the current administration has nearly eliminated. This claim is hard to trust in my opinion. Most middle-class people in this country are struggling now more than ever before.

## About Pulsar

Pulsar is the world's leading audience intelligence platform—harnessing rich data sets, AI and human minds – so our clients can access nuanced and actionable insights that get straight to what matters most to their customers, their businesses and to society.

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