

Future Newsrooms: Creating Engaging News Content for Gen Z



Metaverse studio of blinx, the first MENA digital storytelling hub, powered by Viz Engine and Unreal Engine.

GEN Z AND THE DECLINE OF TRADITIONAL NEWS CONSUMPTION

The way in which people engage with the news is changing – and rapidly. Not so long ago, legacy media news content, including daily news programs at specific times, was still the dominant method of consumption. And the format of regular news digests – a staple of live broadcasting since the 1950s – had retained its appeal across generations.

But something profound has happened during the past 10 years or so. Although the move away from traditional news outlets and formats started to become apparent with Generation Y, it accelerated dramatically in the era of Gen Z¹.

Before we go any further, a quick recap: Gen Zers were born between the mid 1990s and early 2000s and are the first generation to be fully digital native: in other words, they have never known a world without the internet, smartphones, or social media.

When it comes to news consumption, their habits are dramatically different than generations past. A recent overview by journalism.co.uk², drawing on sources including the FIPP Media Innovation report, highlights the following trends:

- Social media is a “*must for any news organization hoping to reach the under-25s*”, with the latest Reuters Institute Digital News Report (DNR) revealing that 38% of Gen Zers each use Facebook and TikTok, while 60% use Instagram
- Gen Zers are “*highly skeptical*” consumers of news and are also more reluctant to pay for their news than previous generations.
- Gen Zers have issues with the volume and intensity of the news cycle – finding the sheer number of stories “*overwhelming*” and a “*downer on their mood*.”
- Gen Zers may also be afflicted by a “*declining interest in the news*,” although different methods of delivery – such as concise explainers – have proven “*stimulating, useful and amusing*.”

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GEN Z OPT FOR
SOCIAL MEDIA TO
GET THEIR NEWS
EACH DAY

6%

*use the radio each day
as a source news*

5%

*use cable news,
network news and local
newspapers*

4%

*use national
newspapers as a daily
news source*

Separate research – this time from Statista and focusing on the US – further underlines the ‘social media first’ approach of Gen Zer’s. In fact, it shows that half of respondents opt for social media to get their news each day – comfortably eclipsing streaming services (23% of respondents) and online-only news sites (13%).

For legacy media providers, the news (so to speak) looks bleak. Only 6% use the radio each day as a source news, followed by cable news, network news and local newspapers at 5% each.

Confirming the decline of major print media, national newspapers register the smallest share, with only 4% using them as a daily news source.

This presents a major challenge to traditional news sources. However, enduring question marks over the reliability of news via social media means that it should also be regarded as an opportunity – providing that ‘legacy’ companies take steps to create more engaging content, not least using graphics.

To explore this concept of engaging younger generations in news consumption further in depth, we commissioned original research, the findings of which we explore in this eBook including:

- **The role of graphics in creating more impactful content**
- **The potential of graphics to produce news content with mainstream appeal across platforms and outlets**
- **The use of innovative graphics solutions from Vizrt to create Gen Z-friendly news content by broadcasters including TVNZ and GB News**
- **That there is a need for broadcasters everywhere to optimize their coverage for all viewers ahead of what promises to be another critical news-cycle in 2024**

GEN Z GRAPHICS NEEDS

The viewer engagement research commissioned by Vizrt draws on a total sample of 4,000 across six age groups: 18-24, which relates most closely to Gen Z; 25 to 35; 35 to 44; 45 to 54; 55 to 64; 65 and over.

One of the most significant takeaways from the research is that the news content must evolve to satisfy Gen Z, which is a highly visual generation due to the following findings:

31%

ALWAYS PAY ATTENTION TO ON-SCREEN GRAPHICS WHEN WATCHING BROADCAST PROGRAMS
(COMPARED TO ONLY 14% ACROSS ALL SIX SURVEY GROUPS)

48%

REPORT THAT ON-SCREEN GRAPHICS SHOW THEM DATA IN A CLEAR WAY (COMPARED TO AN
AVERAGE OF 46% ACROSS ALL SIX SURVEY GROUPS)

51%

REPORT THAT ON-SCREEN GRAPHICS HELP THEM TO UNDERSTAND COMPLEX STORIES
(COMPARED TO AN AVERAGE OF 42% ACROSS ALL SIX SURVEY GROUPS)

47%

REPORT THAT ON-SCREEN GRAPHICS ARE HELPFUL WHEN WATCHING PROGRAMS 'ON THE GO'
(COMPARED TO AN AVERAGE OF 32% ACROSS ALL SIX SURVEY GROUPS)

60%

OF RESPONDENTS STATE THAT IT IS IMPORTANT FOR ON-SCREEN GRAPHICS TO GIVE THEM
CLARITY ABOUT THE DATA THAT IS BEING DISCUSSED (UP FROM AN AVERAGE OF 57% ACROSS
ALL SIX SURVEY GROUPS)

57%

STATE THAT IS IMPORTANT FOR ON-SCREEN GRAPHICS TO LOOK VISUALLY APPEALING
(COMPARED TO AN OVERALL AVERAGE OF 53%)

54%

ASSERT THE IMPORTANCE OF ON-SCREEN GRAPHICS ADDING EXTRA INFORMATION NOT OTHERWISE SHOWN ON SCREEN (COMPARED TO AN OVERALL AVERAGE OF 50%)

56%

STATE THAT CONTENT BEING CREATED FOR HORIZONTAL VIEWING – AND NOT ADAPTED OR OPTIMIZED FOR VERTICAL VIEWING – IS THE MAIN ISSUE THAT CAN ARISE WHEN WATCHING BROADCAST PROGRAMS ON MOBILE DEVICES

45%

STATE THAT LACK OF ONSCREEN GRAPHICS CAN BE AN ISSUE THAT ARISES WHEN WATCHING BROADCAST PROGRAMS ON MOBILE DEVICES



AR graphics on TVNZ for the New Zealand national elections, powered by Viz Engine and Unreal Engine.

73%

OF GEN ZERS
AGREE THAT
REAL-TIME DATA AND
VIRTUAL ON-SCREEN
GRAPHICS ADD TO
THE EXPERIENCE

64%

OF GEN ZERS
AGREE THAT
REAL-TIME DATA AND
VIRTUAL ON-SCREEN
GRAPHICS HELP
THEM FEEL MORE
ENGAGED WITH
CONTENT

72%

OF GEN ZERS
AGREE THAT
REAL-TIME DATA AND
VIRTUAL ON-SCREEN
GRAPHICS HELP
THEM FEEL MORE
IMMERSED IN
THE STORY



Graphics from the blinx MENA digital storytelling launch, powered by Viz Engine and Unreal Engine.

The final data fields of the survey reinforce the critical nature of data and graphics to the entire viewing experience of Gen Zers:

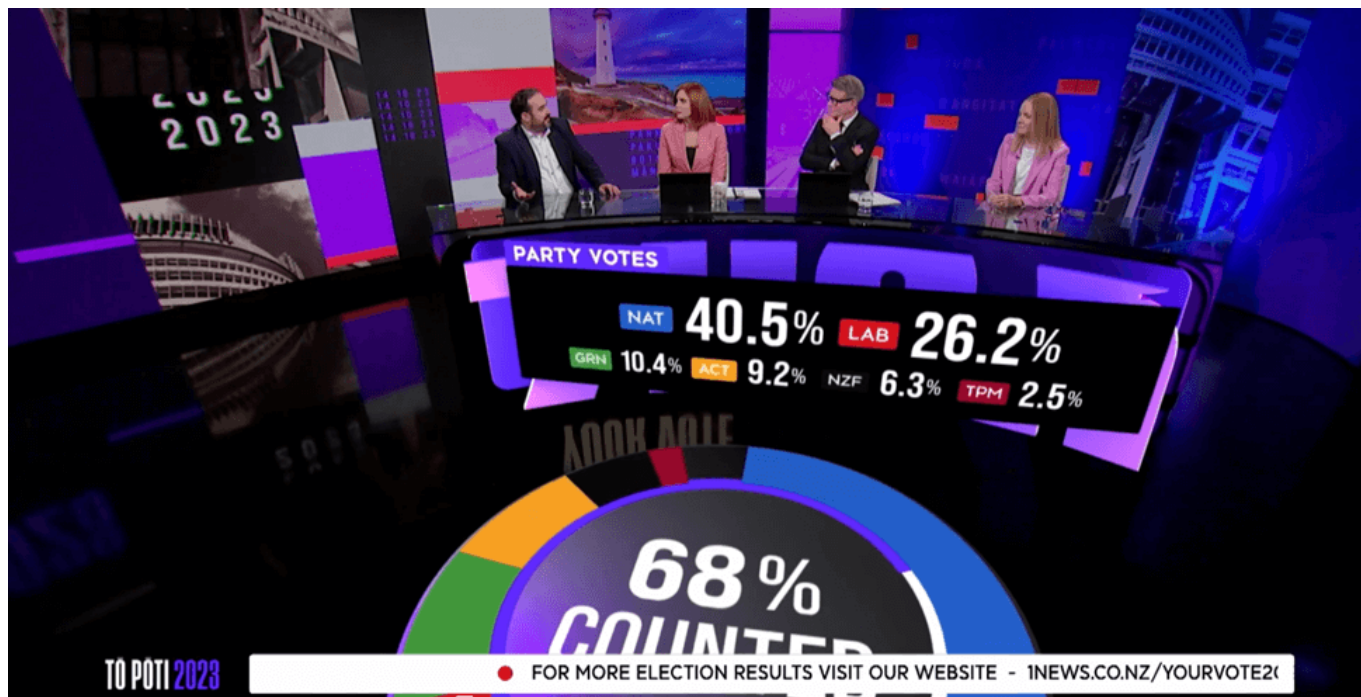
- 73% of Gen Zers agree that real-time data and virtual on-screen graphics add to their viewing experiences
- 64% of Gen Zers agree that real-time data and virtual on-screen graphics help them feel more engaged with content
- 72% of Gen Zers agree that real-time data and virtual on-screen graphics help them feel more immersed in the story

DELIVERING NEWS WITH GEN Z APPEAL

From the findings outlined above, we can deduce the following top five priorities for news organizations and outlets who want to building a lasting connection with Gen Z:

1. **Delivery via social media should be prioritized alongside linear broadcast**
2. **On-screen graphics should be regarded as ‘essential’ and not merely a ‘nice to have’**
3. **On-screen graphics need to be engaging, immersive and, where possible, incorporate information that is not otherwise present on-screen and/or relayed by the presenter or journalist**
4. **Once a viewer has established a connection to a broadcaster, on-screen graphics can be an important point of familiarity and a signifier of quality/brand recognition**
5. **Production versatility and capability will become even more critical as Gen Z gives way to Gen Alpha**

Many broadcasters are already integrating new technologies within the newsroom to drive engagement and appeal to younger audiences sustaining interest and combating the challenge of changing content consumption patterns.



New Zealand national night of elections covered by TVNZ, graphics powered by Vizrt.

EXPLORING ENGAGING GEN Z IRL (IN REAL LIFE)

Vizrt graphics have helped broadcasters connect with Gen Z for news coverage and build in sufficient flexibility for whatever the future might bring. These two cases showcase how innovative on-screen graphics can be used to build loyalty among Gen Zers, including for coverage of critical news events such as General Elections.

TVNZ: HOW VIZRT GRAPHICS HELPED THE NEW ZEALAND BROADCASTER PRODUCE ITS 'MOST-WATCHED' ELECTION TO DATE

If there is a broadcaster that knows how to harness the latest technology to enhance its coverage of a critical news story and achieve a strong viewership across generations – including Gen Z – then it is New Zealand television network TVNZ.

Having implemented a plan for data-driven 3D and augmented reality (AR) graphics, powered by Vizrt technologies, the broadcaster's 1News coverage of the recent General Election in New Zealand attracted a reported **1.4 million viewers – over 40% of the 3.5 million registered voters in the country – with online platform TVNZ+ generating more 268,378 streams, making for the single biggest day in its history.**

The success on the day should not be allowed to overshadow the 14 months of planning that preceded it, with up to 280 people – including 60 journalists – involved in producing the debates and main election coverage across linear, digital and hybrid platforms.

“Election coverage for TVNZ is one of those big signature pieces that we do every three years, so it's important that we get that right for our viewers.”

- Lindsay Chalmers, General Manager for Enterprise Operations, TVNZ

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New Zealand national night of elections covered by TVNZ, graphics powered by Vizrt.

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“We use elections to set the standard of where we want our graphics, design and [AR] capability to be for the next one, two or three years.”

Mark Fleming
Design Lead
TVNZ

Like many other broadcasters, TVNZ has been increasingly conscious of the drift among younger viewers away from mainstream services towards social media and other online sources.

Recognizing the importance – not least for the democratic process – of delivering election coverage with cross-generational appeal, the broadcaster set about devising content that was impactful and visually engaging.

In line with Vizrt’s latest research about the power of graphics in supporting viewer understanding, TVNZ’s election content was graphics-driven. Continuing its long association with Vizrt, the broadcaster employed Viz Engine and Unreal Engine to power stunning 3D and AR graphics in the main studio, relayed primarily by a 13-metre LED screen. This centerpiece system was augmented by a green screen set-up that provided a ‘set extension’ and allowed TVNZ to seamlessly project an expansion of its virtual set design.

On the night, graphics were used to visualize developments including shifts in vote counting and percentages of seats won. *“We can crunch and visualize a lot of data very quickly,” says TVNZ Design Lead Mark Fleming. “We use elections to set the standard of where we want our graphics, design and [AR] capability to be for the next one, two or three years.”*

TVNZ has long used templated graphics in their workflows. Designers created scenes using Viz Artist that are incorporated into the template authoring tool, Template Builder. Although Viz Pilot Edge supports scripting and data integration, the elections team decided to build a bespoke data integration app to handle the live data from the Elections Commission.

The editorial team used Viz Pilot Edge on election day to update the templates graphics as needed – for example, updating candidates’ names, changing keys and lower thirds, and making other text-based updates – for a seamless, error-free workflow.



GB News Control Room using Viz Mosart for newsroom automation.

With the election coverage proving a hit across platforms, and a production infrastructure that supports ongoing evolution of content, **TVNZ Head of Technology Jean-Louis “JL” Açafrão** sounds optimistic about the future: “*Linear will always be our bread and butter, and our biggest audiences. But increasingly we’re starting to see the younger viewers coming through on other channels; we’ve got to be where the eyeballs are.*”

GB News delivers news production versatility with Vizrt tools

Establishing a new channel always provides an opportunity to think about long-term program-making needs and develop a production set-up to match. The first domestic free-to-air news channel to be launched in the UK for more than three decades, GB News was born during the pandemic – a factor that surely contributed to an emphasis on flexibility that led to the adoption of an IP-based infrastructure with NDI technology at its core.

Stephen Willmott, Head of Technology & Operations at GB News, indicates that embracing a digital vision has been an important extension of its linear foundations. “*We want to be the newsroom of the future. We want to put technology in place that will support our growth now and into the future. So, embracing NDI, the cloud and IP-based technologies enable us to grow into the future.*”

Flexibility has been embedded into the channel’s London base. NDI powers the studio – including graphics, auto cues, monitors, and cameras – with tools including NDI Bridge allowing users to securely share NDI sources between local or remote sites. Meanwhile, in the newsroom, news producers are fully responsible for their stories and building rundowns, with Viz Pilot Edge delivering templated graphics and enabling content to be brought to air quickly and efficiently.

Ben Briscoe, Head of Programming at GB News, comments: “*All of our producers use Viz Pilot Edge. The templated graphics help them to be autonomous and empower them to produce much of the content on their own. They can preview all these graphics on their laptops, so I am very, very confident that what we are putting to air is correct.*”

One specific requirement was for ticker technology that could seamlessly integrate with third parties, including weather information from the UK Met Office – this resulted in a specific customization by the R&D team from cloud-based graphics platform Viz Flowics.

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'Digital First' GB News newsroom in London.

"At the time we were looking at Viz Flowics they didn't support the UK Met Office's integration and they built that from scratch for us to show the specific weather conditions for where our viewers are," says Briscoe.

A new data connector – along with automation and city filter specifications unique to GB News – was supplied within a week. GB News – which is also making use of other Vizrt solutions including Viz Mosart and Viz Engine – is now developing a secondary studio that will be connected to its headquarters and able to access the same tools via NDI.

FUTURE NEWSROOMS: CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY

It is possible to create sufficient flexibility in your broadcast set-up to accommodate changing production requirements and viewer expectations, and create content that is visually engaging – in particular, by using data-driven graphics that illustrate the main points of a story – and poised to connect with multiple generations, including Gen Z.

Research suggesting that Gen Z is more disconnected from the news than previous generations should not be overlooked. However, there have been many events this year that have incontrovertibly engaged the interests (and passions) of younger people. Simultaneously, the scope for misleading information about important news events appears to have reached a new level on social media.

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This should be of urgent concern to news providers and their technology partners as we move into 2024. It promises to be another year of historic events, including national elections and the Olympics. For Gen Zers, this translates to a demand for visual storytelling that is stronger than ever. Graphics have a huge part to play in explaining significant developments in a way that is transparent and straightforward to understand.

Research shows that data-backed reporting really hits home in an era when it's easy to feel overwhelmed by the sheer volume of news confronting us each day. Combining well-chosen data with innovative graphics – such as those provided by Vizrt solutions – provides broadcasters with an incredibly powerful method of conveying and explaining news events.

While the interest of Gen Zers in newer media organizations and outlets represents a long-term existential challenge for legacy broadcasters, it can also be seen as a huge opportunity. The need for transparency and truth is more important than ever, and broadcasters with a proven track-record of news production are well-positioned to satisfy it. But to do so, they must accept that consumption habits have changed forever and so content must become more visually engaging to meet the expectations of digital natives.

Harnessing the power of on-screen graphics is one of the primary ways in which this can be achieved, so for news broadcasters everywhere there is no time to waste.

**READY TO LEARN
MORE ABOUT VIZRT'S
SOLUTIONS FOR
THE NEWSROOM?**

Click the link below:

BOOK A DEMO

SOURCES

¹ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Generation%20Z>

² <https://www.journalism.co.uk/news/fipp-media-innovation-report-five-trends-to-watch/s2/a1050094/>

³ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1124119/gen-z-news-consumption-us/#:~:text=Gen%2520Zers%2520where%2520significantly%2520less,Tv%2520on%2520a%2520daily%2520basis>

⁴ <https://stoppress.co.nz/news/tvnz-scores-massive-audience-for-election-coverage/>