

jeeng

2021 Digital Publishing Consumer Survey

Surviving to Thriving: A Publisher's
Guide to Engaging Gen Z and
Millennial Audiences



The perfect storm, and the path out of it.

What a year it's been for publishers. Not only have they scrambled to deal with breaking news seemingly every minute, but fake news has clouded the perception of journalistic integrity. Meanwhile advertisers have pulled back because of economic uncertainty just as the demise of third-party cookies and social media domination converged to create a triple-threat to revenue.

Let's put it this way: Prioritizing audience engagement and loyalty used to be essential to a publisher's success. Now, it's vital for their survival.

In the wake of all this turmoil, publishers need new ways to take back control of their audiences and build 1:1 relationships with subscribers. That can seem daunting, especially when it comes to Gen Z and Millennials (GZM).

But daunting doesn't have to mean impossible. So we asked ourselves, How do these digital natives consume information? What are their attitudes about trust, personalization and advertising? And more importantly, how

can these learnings inform strategies to increase audience acquisition, engagement and loyalty?

This year's annual consumer survey examines just that. And what we've found may surprise you.

While Gen Z and Millennials grew up in the era of social media and have a strong affinity for social platforms, they have high expectations for personalization and authenticity in the brands they trust.

Contrary to publishers' assumption that to a social pretense equates to authentic connections, the reality is that tired-and-true methods like email newsletters and new channels like browser-based push notifications are exceedingly more effective with this younger generation.

“

Publishers need new ways to take back control of their audiences.

It's not what you think. Hint: don't think social.

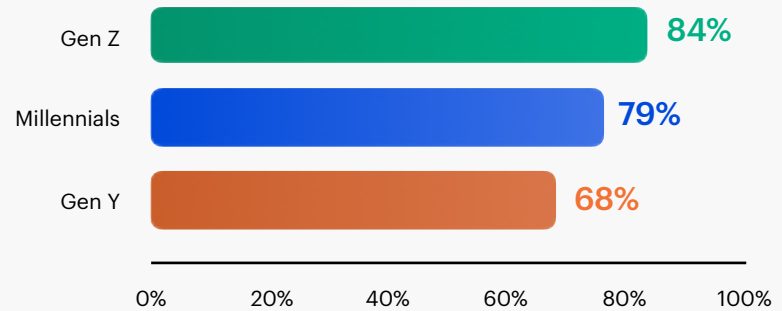
For better or worse, 84% of Gen Z and 79% of Millennials rely primarily on social media for their news. What's more, nearly 70% of Gen Xers also say it's their primary source of news—not quite the wide gap between generations we might expect.

The good news for publishers? Nearly 2 out of 3 GZM users say they also use publishers' websites to get their news, with 1 in 3 saying it's their primary source.

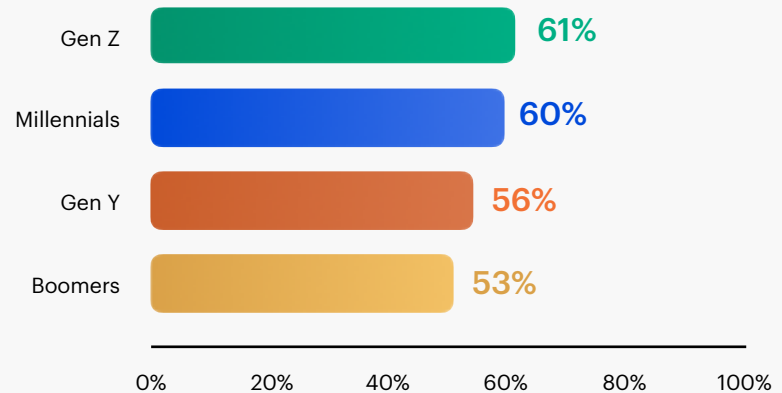
In fact, GZM are more likely to use publisher's websites to get their news than both Gen X and Baby Boomers. And even though they tend to gravitate toward social, 71% of Gen Z and 65% of Millennials say they read 2-3 digital publications or websites regularly.

This direct-from-the-publisher consumption is right on par with older generations.

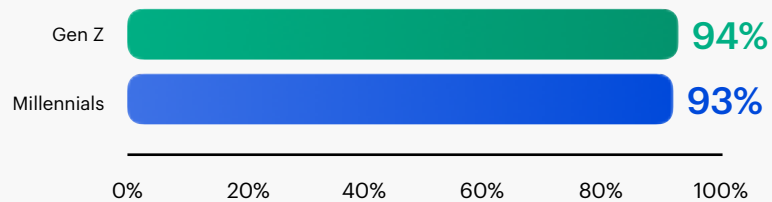
Gen Z and Millennials rely on social media primarily for news:



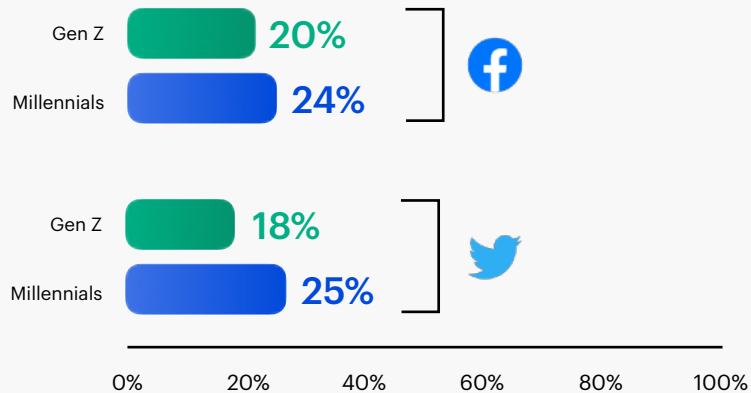
They also rely heavily on publisher's websites:



Confidence in the Credibility of Publishing Sites



Confidence in the Credibility of Social Content



GZM trusts publishers' content. Trust us.

GZM are far more confident in the credibility of content on publishers' websites than they are of social content, with nearly 95% expressing confidence that the news they read on publishers' websites is credible.

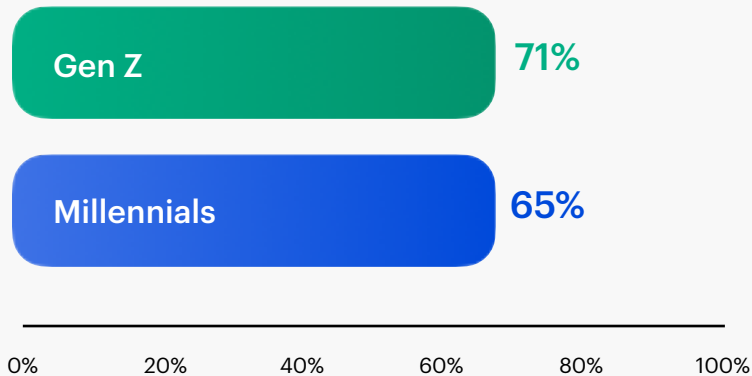
Conversely, only 20% of Gen Z and 24% of Millennials are extremely or very confident that news they read on Facebook is credible, and nearly half of Gen Z (47%) and 4 out of 10 Millennials (39%) say they're not confident or they don't use Facebook at all.

And, it's not just Facebook that has a credibility problem: confidence in Twitter is about the same, with fewer than 1/4 of GZM viewing the Twitter-sphere as a credible source of news.

✔ Fact Check

Gen Z and Millennials are more likely to fact-check stories and look for bias before they share it on social media, including checking for a reputable source, verifying that the story was published recently, or cross-checking against multiple sources. And roughly 1 out of 5 say they don't share news on social at all. Perhaps because it's not worth the risk or the time they'd have to invest?

Percentage of People Who Say They Don't Share News on Social Media



The bottom line (that also increases your bottom line.)

Publishers have a huge advantage in growing their audience by emphasizing their credibility and trustworthiness.

But it isn't going to happen through social because GZMs are skeptical of what they see there and won't share content. Instead, publishers need to build 1:1 relationships with subscribers by bringing them directly to their site and leveraging their credibility.

That means eliminating the social middleman whose credibility problem is undermining their efforts.



Email: Very Much Alive and Well



To the “Email is Dead” generation, email is very much alive.

Perhaps the biggest surprise to come out of our survey is the fact that—contrary to popular belief— young people have not written off email in favor of social. In fact, our longitudinal data gathered over the last few years shows that even Millennials are still very much using email. (It’s not just for their parents and grandparents.)

Despite being called “dead” and claims that email is being or has been replaced by social, the data shows that’s just not true for GZM users. Nearly 80% of Gen Z and 93% of Millennials check it several times a day, proving that they remain highly engaged with this tried-and-true channel.

What’s more, email is the preferred channel for real-time alerts for 3 out of 4 Gen Z and 2/3 of Millennials.

Have you heard the news(letter)?

Among those who subscribe to email newsletters, loyalty, trust and content relevancy are the top three reasons they do so. More than half of GZM say they subscribe to emails because they're already regularly reading the content on the publishers' site. Trust is the second most important factor, with 48% and 52% respectively saying they'll subscribe if they trust the publisher. Finally, relevancy is also a major factor with 47% of Gen Z and 51% of Millennials who say they'll subscribe to an email newsletter when it's a topic they care about.

But, subscribing to and actually reading those emails are two different things. Unsurprisingly, trust is once again the top factor that drives email newsletter engagement for the third year in a row, with half or more of respondents across all age groups ranking this the number one reason they read publisher emails. An engaging subject line follows closely in the #2 position which means publishers must choose carefully about which content to feature to snag readers' attention.

Top 3 Reasons GZMs Subscribe To Email Newsletters

#1

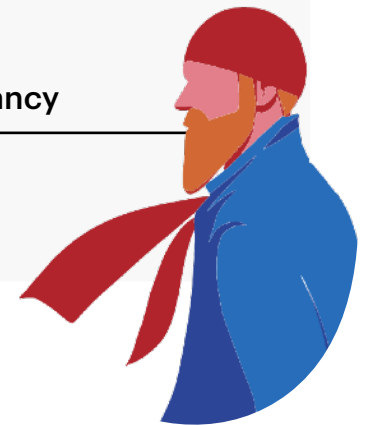
They're Already Reading the Content Regularly

#2

Trust in the Publisher

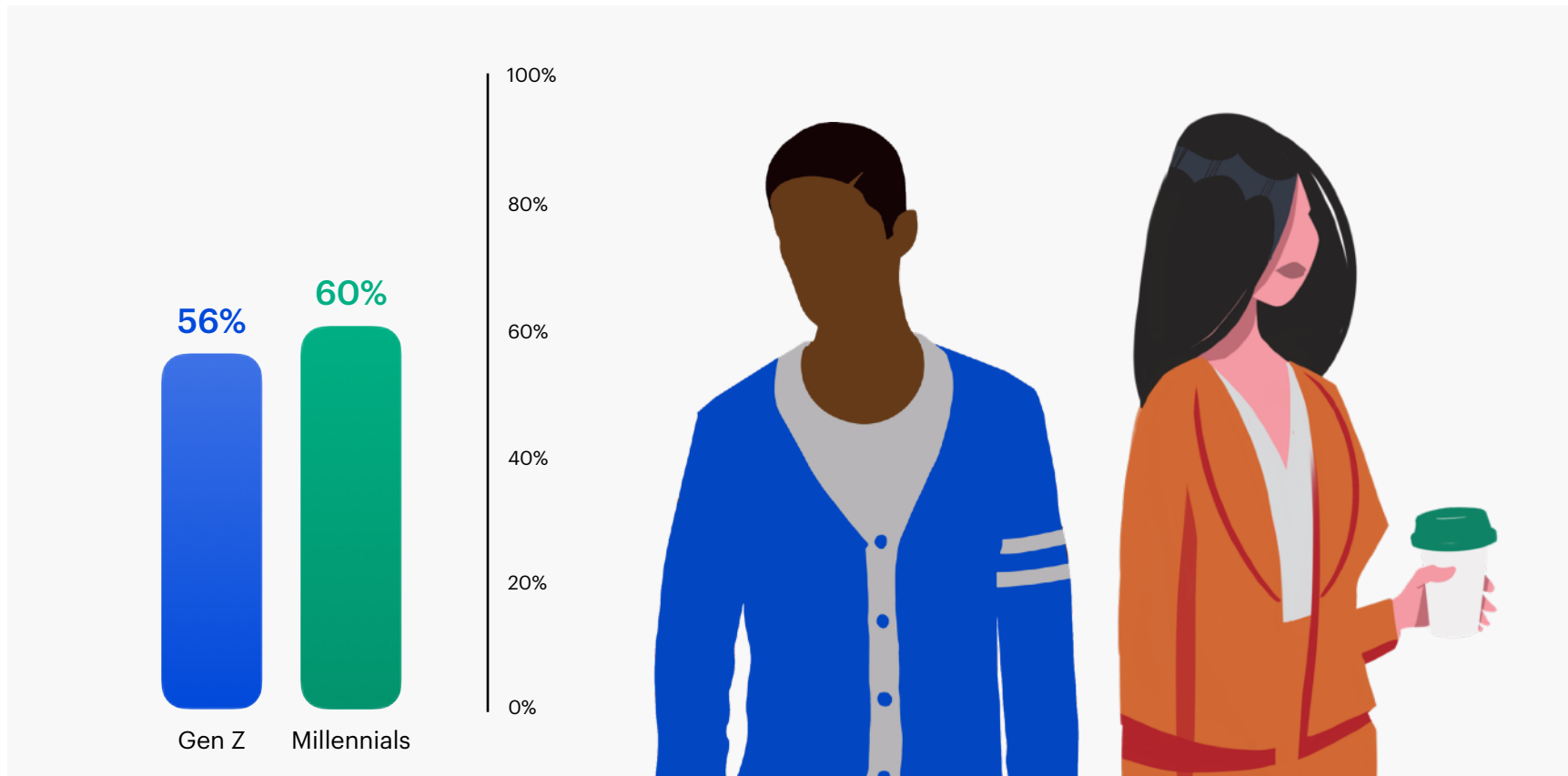
#3

Topic Relevancy



✔ Fact Check

56% of Gen Z and 60% of Millennials would sign up for multiple, top-focused newsletters from a trusted publisher—more so than older generations. That suggests publishers needn't worry about sending too much email if the content is relevant and personalized to subscribers' interests.



Analysis



We didn't have to channel GZM to know how they feel about Email channel.

Email represents a huge opportunity for publishers to connect directly with young subscribers who overwhelmingly prefer this channel. Data shows that they're not only active email users but they also engage when the content is relevant and trusted.

Publishers can leverage the inherent trust users have in their brand and in the channel to drive engagement. But in order to be effective, publishers must provide the content users want, which means finding a way to personalize the emails they send out to maintain content relevancy.

Personalization is Paramount

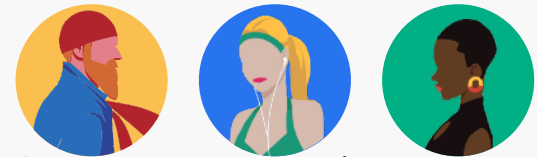
Our data shows there's a relatively strong demand for personalized web content: 66% and 63% of Gen Z and Millennials say they want personalized content based on their behavior and interests—roughly 10% more than older generations.

But GZM users can easily see through the gimmicks like simply adding their first name to the subject line. They want more authentic personalized web experiences and emails: over half of GZM users say they want to receive personalized emails from publishers they trust.

In fact, contrary to what publishers may fear, young audiences are quite comfortable with publishers tracking their online behavior to deliver a personalized experience, with nearly 80% saying they're fine with tracking, especially when they trust the publisher, the publisher is transparent, and the data improves their experience through personalization.

✔ Fact Check

GZM is more likely to subscribe to an email newsletter if they know the content will be personalized to their interests.



2/3 agree they'd be more likely to subscribe, compared to just over half of Gen X and Baby Boomers.

Analysis

Publishers must find a way to deliver personalization. Despite their advanced algorithms, social platforms aren't the answer because publishers have no access to user data to understand their audiences' behaviors and interests.

With the demise of third-party cookies, publishers must find a way to build their own first-party data strategy to deliver the personalization GZM users expect.

And it must be done in a way that maintains credibility, loyalty and engagement. By focusing their efforts on acquiring new direct email sign-ups, publishers can leverage both the first-party data and the privacy-compliant permissions inherent in email subscriptions to drive personalization and cultivate trust.



Trust Opens the Door to Push

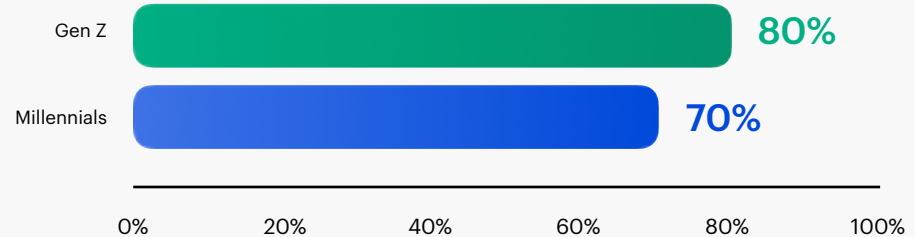
We're pushing you to send push notifications.

Publishers have an opportunity to leverage trust when engage GZM across new and emerging channels.

An overwhelming 80% of Gen Z users say they're open to receiving browser-based push notifications and 70% of Millennials are, too. Breaking news delivered via push is especially of interest, with nearly 80% of GZM saying yes to receiving urgent news via push.

Again, personalization is paramount with push: 2 out of 3 GZM users say they want personalized push content, which is one of the top four factors in their decision to subscribe in the first place.

Percentage of Users That Are Open to Receiving Browser-Based Push Notifications

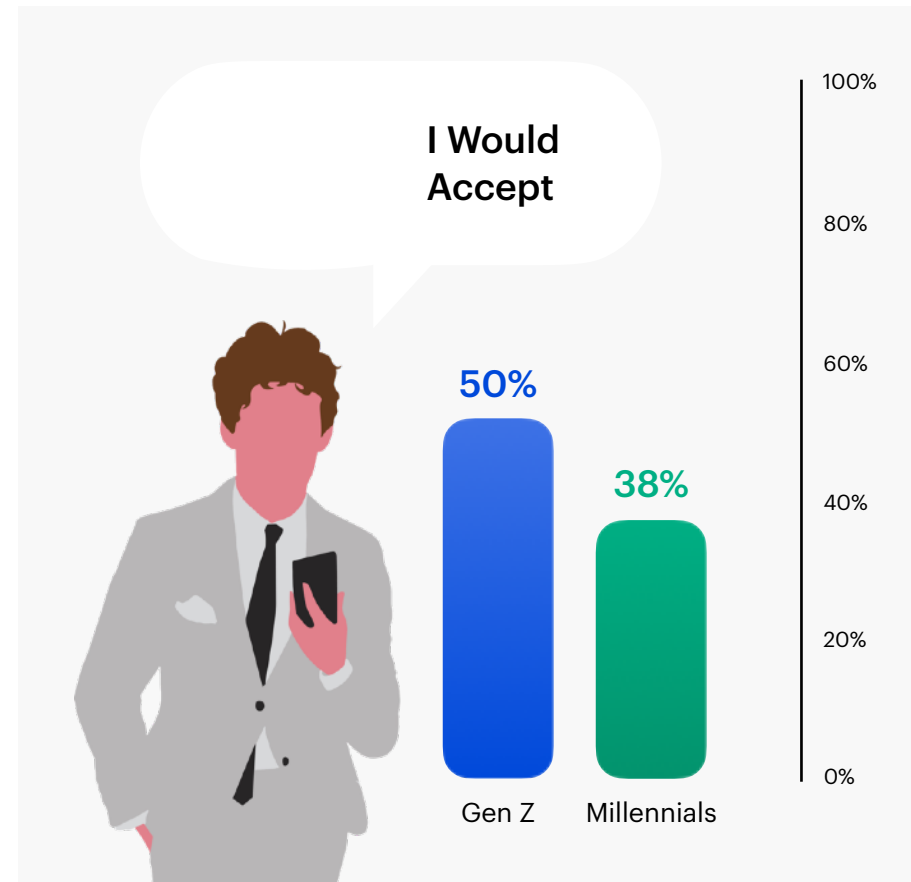


Survey Question	Gen Z	Millennials
I trust the company	49%	39%
The content is relevant	37%	33%
It's breaking news	34%	34%
It's personalized	17%	17%

Let the smart AI do the heavy lifting for once.

Just like personalizing the content is crucial, so is personalizing the delivery channel. Subscribers are more likely to engage with content when it's delivered over their channel of choice. That's why establishing a multi-channel messaging program is important for publishers who want to leverage every possible touchpoint to engage subscribers.

You need a way to deliver the right message to the right subscriber over the right channel. But, of course, personalizing the content and delivery channel for every subscriber manually is impossible. To do so at the scale required, publishers need to enlist the help of a multi-channel messaging platform that leverages AI to do the heavy lifting for them. With the right solution on board, subscribers get the content they want over the channel they prefer with next to no effect for the publisher.



Trust Translates to Ad Revenue

GZM users are surprisingly adamant about ads.

It's clear that personalization, relevancy and respect for data privacy are important for building trust with audiences. But it's also critical for revenue growth. As we've established before, trust in the publisher translates to trust in the advertisers featured within that publishers' pages and outreach.

There's ample opportunity for publishers to leverage this "conveyed trust" to drive new revenue. This is especially important considering that 75% of GZM users say they do not pay for digital content or email subscriptions. Instead, they seem to "get" that advertising is necessary to generate the revenue publishers need to stay in business.

Nearly 3 out of 4 say they'd rather see ads and get free content than to pay for it. And for publishers who worry that inserting ads in email newsletters will offend subscribers or escalate unsubscribes, good news:

nearly 2/3 say they're not bothered by or don't even notice the ads.

Even better news, 65% of Gen Z and 75% of Millennials say they'll click on the ads in email newsletters if they trust the sender, and 53% of Gen Z and 60% of Millennials are open to ads in push notifications—as long as they're personalized.

Fact Check

60% of Millennial users prefer personalized ads—more so than any other generation—and they're more likely to click on an ad if it's relevant or interesting.

Publishers: don't give up revenue to gobblers.

With users reluctant to pay for content through subscriptions or paywalls, publishers must rely on advertising in order to pay the bills. But with Facebook and search gobbling up the majority of ad spend and hoarding all the user data, publishers have struggled to maintain revenue, putting their business models at risk.

In order to recoup their losses and grow revenue once again, publishers must be able to leverage their own first-party data and channels that *they* can control to reach these captive and engaged audiences. By implementing a multi-channel messaging strategy that includes web, email and push notifications, publishers can engage audiences with personalized content and advertising that drives revenue growth.



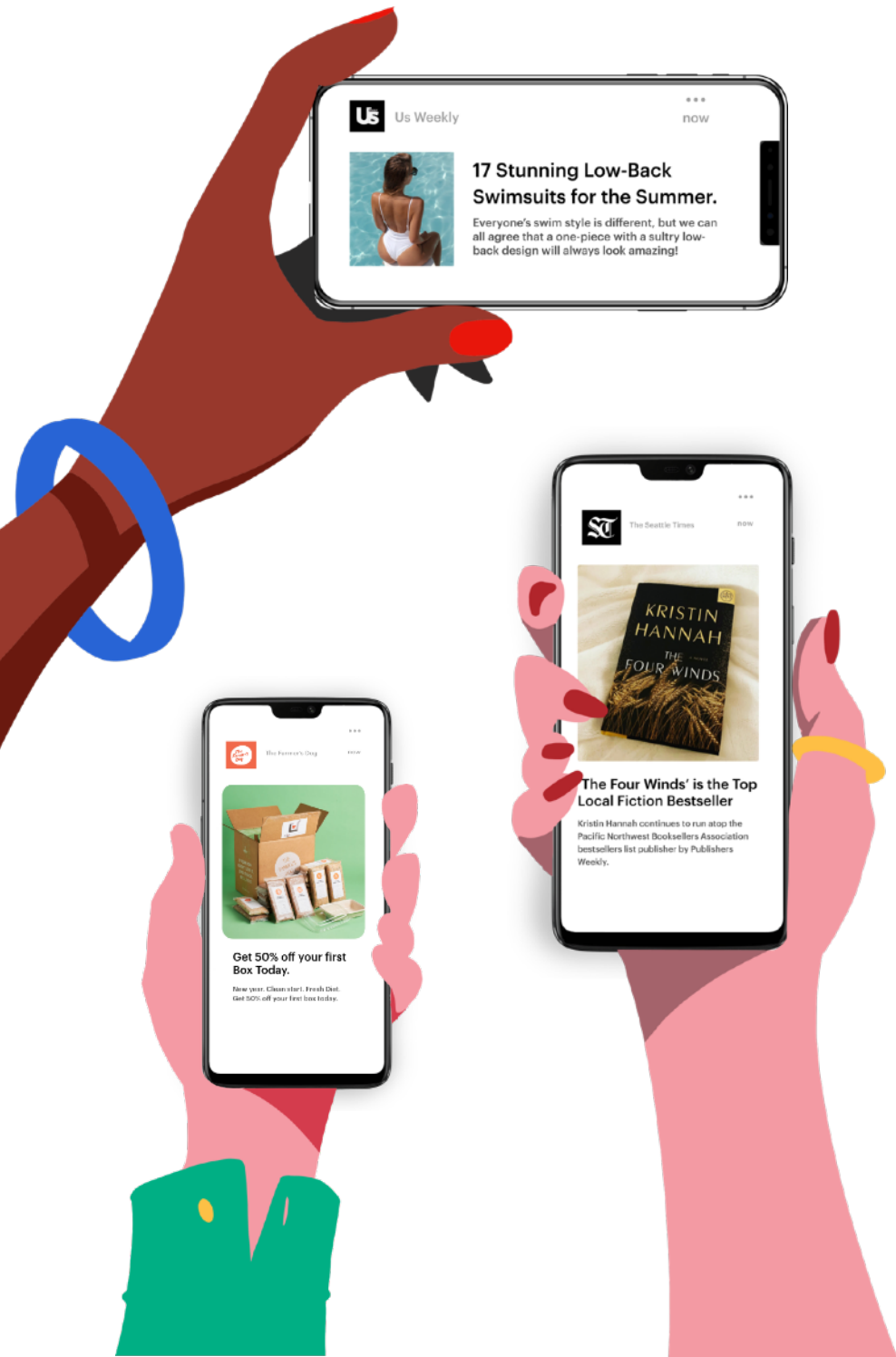
Technology Tears Down Walls



One on one so that you can win on win.

Publishers face a lot of barriers to audience engagement: paywalls aren't working, the walled gardens of social and search keep them from having a direct connection with subscribers, cookies are crumbling, and revenue is flattening.

In order to tear down those walls and get valuable, relevant and engaging content in front of users, publishers must leverage technology that gives them the ability to establish 1:1 relationships with their subscribers. Only then can they achieve the personalization, automation, multi-channel approach and monetization that keeps subscribers coming back—and keeps the lights on.



jeeng is the platform publishers need.

That's where Jeeng can help. The Jeeng platform delivers the audience engagement trifecta:

- Personalized content
- Automated curation
- Multi-channel delivery

We help publishers to acquire new logged-in subscribers and then deliver the right content to the right user over the right channel automatically. With Jeeng, publishers can build their own first-party data strategy and leverage AI to optimize and personalize the user experience for every subscriber with next to no effort. And with our built-in monetization options, the entire solution pays for itself.

How can Jeeng help bring your audience (and revenue) back today?



jeeng
Bring your audience back

About the Survey:

The online user survey was conducted by Mantis Research in mid-November 2020 and included over 1,000 U.S. respondents from a cross-section of age, gender, education level and political affiliation.

Visit www.jeeng.com for more information.