NEWLOCAL
New approaches for local media

FINAL VERSION OF THE GUIDEBOOK ON BEST PRACTICES

Contents

1. INTRODUCTION

Project name: New approaches for local media

Project acronym: NEWLOCAL

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Local media have an advantage in direct access to local users and in serving content that does not compete with big national media. However, the target market is small, and advertisers are frequently not interested in cooperating with small media companies.

Through the **NEWLOCAL** cooperative project, our consortium of local media companies will develop a new approach to the audience, which will also help us develop new products and opportunities for increasing advertising revenue. We will focus on new technology, first in the form of mobile apps for all consortium partners' media and then on developing tools to improve interactivity with our users. We will focus on polls, quizzes, smart push notifications, gamification, user-generated content and personalization of the content for every user.

We will focus on **internal know-how sharing** during the project through conferences, workshops, reports, and work exchange programmes. But, we will also make our knowledge public, as our findings will be available through the project's website for all interested local media to learn about our activities, experiments and what has worked and what hasn't.

The project will have a significant impact on sustainability, competitiveness and long-term success.

The consortium for NEWLOCAL project is composed of **10 local media companies from 4 countries (Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, and Montenegro).** We come from diverse backgrounds (radio, print, online), but we are all now established digital media, with editorial teams for online production and increasing online revenues.

Who's Participating?

The NEWLOCAL consortium is a diverse group of 10 local media companies from four different countries:

From Croatia (HR)

Varaždinske vijesti d.d.

Sjeverni pol d.o.o.

RI PORTAL j.d.o.o.

Pro Media d.o.o.

From Serbia (RS)

Tim za razvoj i integracije

Radio Magnum-18 d.o.o.

Privredno društvo Boom93 d.o.o.

From Slovenia (SI)

NT&RC d.o.o.

RADIO TEDNIK PTUJ, družba za časopisno in radijsko dejavnost, d.o.o.

From Montenegro (ME)

Digital media factory d.o.o.

2. GUIDEBOOK ON BEST PRACTICES

In this document, **„Guidebook on best practices",** NEWLOCAL Consortium will show best practices they have learned during the project.

It will cover three main segments:

1. Tech hints and tips on how best to use tools, how we have developed them and what we plan to keep them innovative and fresh in the future.

2. Best approach to the audience using tools we have developed.

3. How to use interactivity and gamification to involve sponsors' and advertisers' activations.

The purpose of this guidebook is to **present ideas and practical tools which consortium members have used and will be using in their everyday processes**, and it was updated during the project implementation.

Following are the findings from the initial version, and the last part of the document is related to the final observations by the Consortium.

3. Varaždinske vijesti d.d.

Varaždinske vijesti d.d. as the project coordinator believe that the **best way to get new subscribers to their newspaper is by advertising subscriptions on all channels**. Highlighting a more favorable subscription price if the client subscribes, or having the newspapers delivered to their home address.

Their readers are **mainly interested** in information for people that are retired, followed by sports, fun, humor, crossword puzzles, content from economy, yellow pages (news about famous people), general information from the region, cooking content, health related content and legal content, and they are least interested in reports from different events and information about agriculture.

They believe that **different prize games are really important to their readers**, and most of their buyers are regular in buying the newspaper. Their buyers are attracted to the lower subscription costs, and mainly buy the newspapers as soon as they are published and when ordering the newspaper they would like to get a discount for subscription. The **best way to get new subscibers is via Facebook**, because with each post on Facebook people have the chance to hear about Varaždinske vijesti d.d. and become subscribers.

The readers are also impressed with **different coupons with discounts** (for example a discount for the local swimming pool) and with free shopping in a certain amount.

When it comes to print and digital edition of the newspaper, the matter is clear – **older audience prefers the print edition, while the younger audience prefers the digital edition**.

As for the business users they have the possibility to get discount when renting advertising space.

4. Pro Media d.o.o. (ŠibenikIN)

As for **ŠibenikIN** the readers are interested in the same content as the ones of Varaždinske vijesti d.d. but they also look for content realted to additional service information (such as traffic conditions, weather forecast, address book, classified ads etc.), photos, streetstyle and so on.

As ŠibenikIN is an online local media, **they believe that online media cannot have a subscription, but they can have the 'help' of readers through a system of voluntary donations.**

Regarding the benefits for readers, **they believe that two categories should be introduced through the membership application system, one free and the other paid**, through which interaction with the media can be achieved, by sending more small ads, inclusion in the competition system with other users and the like (quizzes, etc.).

They also think that **printed editions should be in the function of online media editions**, and that there should be less of them, and instead specialized editions may be published periodically.

5. Sjeverni pol d.o.o. (Dalmatinski portal)

Dalmatinski portal is a local portal that achieves its **competitive advantage in attracting readers and sponsors more by building relationships with different publics than by using IT tools and applications**. Of course, they use everything at their disposal, they have over 150 thousand followers on Facebook, over 18 thousand on Instagram, and they are also active on X and TikTok. However, they cannot say that they are better than national portals in using these applications. To them, they represent only communication channels, and the person on the other side of the computer is much more important.

Namely, Split, as the center of their journalistic interest, is not a big city (160,000 inhabitants), almost everyone knows everyone, and because of this **they are more careful when publishing articles** (some topics are skipped at the expense of clicks, people are their neighbors, friends, not just material for the media), **they avoid clickbaits**, but also when using social networks (comments can be very destructive).

As much as this approach to the audience may result in fewer clicks in the short term, in the long term it has proven to be profitable for them because **many readers think of them as 'their' portal, send them information, photos, videos for free**... They believe that **access to readers should be open** (they try to answer on every message, the mobile phone number is highlighted on the portal and Facebook page) and **honest** (they admit mistakes when they make them, and there is no favoritism of political options when editing, but with clear views of columnists who have freedom).

They **strive to build long-term relationships with marketing clients**. They try to find the best advertising option for them, not the most lucrative for themselves. They often give for free advertising to new businesses to help them get started.

They are looking forward to the opportunities that will open up to them by creating products as part of the NEWLOCAL project, and they expect that with them they will get even closer to readers and advertisers. As they were not inclined to pay for available tools, they did not build good interactivity when it comes to quizzes, polls and similar content, and they totally ignored the comments under the articles (communication took place on their Facebook). **The NEWLOCAL project will allow them to bring readers back from social networks to the portal, where they should spend more time in the future**.

6. RI PORTAL j.d.o.o.

At **RiPortal, they believe that the best way to use IT tools is their integration into Content Management Systems (CMS) if that is possible**. All (local) media operates through CMS, and integrated IT tools or apps can make job for journalists much easier. Of course, **inhouse education or workshops are needed** so that local journalists can implement provided tools into every day work. If that's not possible, IT tools application, and similar tools must be integrated in media workflow in such a way that they are easy to use.

The **best way to reach an audience is direct communication through social networks or through some applications integrated within the media** itself like "Send us Your News" or "Send us information". That way, they encourage the local population to talk about topics that are interesting for them, but also interesting for the whole community, and in the way, to create valuable content. The same thing can be done through social networks.

In regards to How to use interactivity and gamification to engage sponsors and advertisers, if we are, for example, talking about an application "Send us Your News" or similar, then advertisers can be integrated within tool like "Sponsored by...". **On social networks there are ways to encourage audience interaction with call-to-action content which can be sponsored**. Gamification is the easiest way to integrate

advertisers or sponsors, each of the quizzes or games can be sponsored by different sponsor. **Thematic gamification (quizzes) are also way to go** depending on the economic activities in which the sponsor operates e.g. a clothing brand can sponsor a fashion quiz etc.

7. Privredno društvo Boom93 d.o.o.

The content that is distributed through the media, whether it is print, video or audio production, is very important for the end user, ie. the audience. Boom93's audience is **primarily looking for content that is relevant to their daily functioning, e.g. power outages, water outages, road closures, etc.** In addition to that service information, Boom93's audience is looking for **local content that includes local stories and people from their environment**, e.g. a story about a single mother, a story about a woman who is engaged in fishing, a story about a teacher who spent 3 months in Alaska cleaning fish to earn money for his family, etc. **The audience of Boom93 especially turns to their medium in crisis situations such as floods, earthquakes, stormy and icy days**. This was especially noticeable during the coronavirus pandemic. Their audience likes to read and watch content that includes reports from events that they have visited, because they like to share such content. And at the end (or maybe even better at the beginning), their audience eagerly follows the chronicle.

They believe that **headlines are very important to attract the audience to click on a certain content**. **The same applies to the captions they use when publishing content on social networks**. Boom93 currently has the biggest presence on Facebook, while they post stories on Instagram, and they just opened a TikTok account, so they don't have enough data. **Their portal is mainly informative, and their audience does not expect much entertainment on it**, but when they do have such content, it generally goes over very well. Following the analytics, it is evident that they have a loyal audience on their portal, as well as a large number of new users every month. **They currently do not have a subscription system.**

Since they don't have a subscription system, they don't have gifts either. However, when they launched their apps in the fall of 2021, in order to motivate users to download the

app, they organized a raffle and those who downloaded the app and were drawn received a gift book and coffee in their Radio Cafe.

Like everyone, **their audience also loves giveaways**. It is noticeable that mostly the same people apply for prize games. They believe that any kind of free entertainment in the form of a prize game is recommended for building a better and closer relationship with the audience.

Since they are an online portal, their users can access content from all parts of the world that are covered by the internet.

Their audience is touched when they start the stories of small, ordinary and system-invisible people and try/help them solve the problem they have.

Their advertisers can choose two forms of advertising: radio and portal. Recently, they often opt for promotional texts. **The way to provide an advantage to business users is reflected in the packages they provide to those who opt for long-term cooperation**. For example, if the advertiser takes the service for 6 instead of 3 months, he will receive a certain discount, e.g. 15 percent. They always give preference to local advertisers in promotion and packages over marketing agencies and big systems.

When the question is asked what interests young people, they think that it is a very interesting and important question, but they are afraid that the reality is harsh. **Young people today do not follow traditional media, nor do they follow digital media except for social networks, especially TikTok. They hardly recognize the local media**. The way they try to get closer to the young audience, while still maintaining their integrity and respecting their mission and vision, is through content that is important to them - mental health, EU, media literacy, culture, Erasmus plus programs, EXIT festival, etc. They do this by including them as interlocutors in the creation of these contents.

Recently, they have been trying to achieve at least **some cooperation with influencers**. However, it turned out to be a very difficult task. However, they managed to attract an influencer who is focused on feminism, and they are waiting for an interview with her. **They are aware that it is necessary to cooperate with influencers, and they will continue to try to do so**. They think that they are on the right track to reach out to young

people more than before, due to the fact that 3 members of generation Z work in their editorial office.

8. Tim za razvoj i integracije (InfoVranjske.rs)

The portal InfoVranjske.rs publishes content from the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the central government in general only when the news is related to the city of Vranje itself.

The municipal administrative district is located in the southern part of the Republic of Serbia and it includes the city and municipalities:

- Grad Vranje, the urban settlement of Vranje,
- Municipality Vladičin Han, place Vladičin Han,
- Municipality Surdulica, place Surdulica,
- Municipality Bosilegrad, place Bosilegrad,
- Municipality Trgovište, place Trgovište,
- Municipality Bujanovac, place Bujanovac and
- Municipality Preševo, place Preševo.

It has a total of 243,529 inhabitants, and the district headquarters is the city of Vranje.

Cultural-historical sights date back several centuries. The oldest military fortification is from the 13th century - Markovo Kale. The old Turkish hammam (Turkish steam bath) from the 16th century is also known, as well as Pasha's inn from 1765, where a gymnasium was opened in 1881.

Vranjska Banja is a special feature of this region - thermal mineral water that helps in the treatment of many diseases.

The portal publishes content related to the economy, and the economy of Vranje consists of industry, mining, construction, trade, agriculture and forestry.

They occasionally publish health-related content, mostly through interviews with doctors.

They often publish content that contains information about law and psychology, most often when they collaborate with Civil Society organizations, and they deal a lot with pension issues.

They also monitor the work of all social and cultural institutions in the City. The largest number of announcements is related to the library and other artistic facilities in Vranje in the Pčinj district.

They believe that it is of course important for the newspaper to bring a change in relation to the course of the day of the average reader. They try to reach as many audiences as possible through various communication channels.

Their portal is regularly accessed and they have regular readers who return every day.

Until now, **they have not had the option of subscribing to their portal, but they believe that the reason for subscribing would be support for independent media in this area, as well as exclusive content that would represent a reward for their followers**.

The portal is mostly read during working hours and around 8 pm in the afternoon. **The idea is that as much information related to the city and politics will be posted in the morning, while more relaxed topics would be in the afternoon**.

Until now, the InfoVranjske.rs portal **did not work directly with coupons**, but they shared certain actions in the form of "The best comment on social networks", "The best photo", etc.

They have not done prize games so far, but they believe that in the future they can use the potential of the InfoVranjske.rs portal for this kind of action towards followers.

They had campaigns to increase the number of views on the portal, but they did not have much success. They have never had enough funds to create a campaign that would last six months, in order to see the real results of that campaign.

They try to provide more information in the summer months when it's the holiday season about possible obstacles on the road, insurance, congestion at the borders, etc.

They believe that the right place to find new subscribers is the portal itself, as well as social networks. The largest number of followers of their portal comes via Google search and their portal's Facebook page.

They believe that for their audience from Vranje, campaigns like the Newsletter are not very good, while for the audience abroad, they would represent a real hit.

They work with business users to maintain cooperation. If someone is a long-term business client on the InfoVranjske.rs portal, then they receive a certain type of discount or additional service that is not charged.

On the InfoVranjske.rs portal there is a section related to content that directly concerns young people called Activism and young people. There they publish the entire content related to the average reader from 15 to 30 years old.

9. Radio Magnum-18 d.o.o.

Listeners (and readers) of Radio Magnum are mostly interested in general information from the region and town, reports from events and sports.

They believe that the importance of article titles is extremely high, whether it is a text on a portal or an announcement on the radio. Also, **promotion via Facebook is very important to them for each article**. After promoting the article on Facebook, its readership is many times higher.

In order to attract listeners, **the radio often organizes flash raffle games** - gifts to the listeners are: barbecue, pizzas, laundromat vouchers, hairdressing services...

A significant benefit is the additional free broadcasting of advertisements on the radio, as well as free additional advertising on the portal, as well as a discount for a longer period of broadcasting, and they also believe that the prize games in which vouchers for the swimming pool, barbecue, etc. are distributed are very important for long-term cooperation and provide business users with the possibility of additional free advertising.

Their media appeals to the general population locally and currently very little content is dedicated exclusively to young people. They are certainly interested in the music they broadcast and news about new technologies, and when it comes to content on the portal, young people are often engaged in issues related to social justice, human rights, ecology and similar topics.

10. Digital media factory d.o.o. (Novski portal)

Novski portal relies mostly on its content to attract new readers. The content must be **interesting and different, but above all accurate**, and then **by sharing it on Facebook, it is easier to reach regular and new readers.**

As their news is related to local activities, events and individuals from the city, **they also rely on "recommendations" from readers**. Their experience shows that through some topics that are not everyday and general, such as stories about successful children, it is easier to attract new readers.

In addition, they sponsor a page on Facebook. They often publish reels from some events on FB, which is widely shared.

For now, they don't have games on the portal, **only polls, which also increases attendance**, because if it is important for someone to "win" in the poll, he shares it himself and invites his acquaintances to vote for him, which increases visibility of the portal itself.

They cooperate with sponsors exclusively on advertising through banners, and lately they are increasingly using promo texts to present their offer. For their offers to sponsors, they use an internal contact database or direct contact

11. NT&RC d.o.o. and RADIO TEDNIK PTUJ, družba za časopisno in radijsko dejavnost, d. o. o. (Novi Tednik and Radio Ptuj)

Readers of Novi Tednik and listeners of Radio Ptuj are most interested in economic content, general information from their region and locality, cooking content, health content, legal content, psychological content, information for pensioners, information for farmers, yellow pages, celebrities in the newspaper, reports from events (they try to find themselves if they were at a certain event), travelogues, sports, recreational sports, entertainment, humor, crosswords.

Their subscribers **love to solve crossword puzzles, especially when there is an interesting prize involved**, e.g. tickets, vouchers, etc.. They don't like household prizes, **and they buy the newspaper occasionally.**

In order to become a subscriber of the newspaper, they would be tempted by good content and a suitable price, which means that it would be lower/more favorable than the over-the-counter price.

Each age group is interested in something different. Those who have children to enroll in secondary schools and colleges are interested in education content, while agricultural content attracts other structure of the reade.

They believe that readers and listeners would like to receive a gift when ordering a newspaper, such as a discount on a newspaper subscription, a free one-month subscription, a gift voucher worth 20 euros, some kind of grill, a trip, fruit, garden tools, lipstick, medicine, gifts for subscribers who acquire new subscribers (gift vouchers, trips, etc.), but the benefits they would like are free additional newspaper supplements, free advertisements in the newspaper, a discount on radio greetings and a discount on the publication of obituaries and thank you notes.

There was a good response from readers when they gave away the swimming pool and even when they were giving out electric grills.

Most people care about the price, and the response is better when they offer discounts to people; free monthly subscription, discount when paying for a period of one year...

They have clients who spend the summer e.g. at sea and the newspaper is then ordered to their holiday address.

With the online edition, the newspaper is always available, but their audience still likes to read the paper in print.

They believe that new subscribers to the newspaper can be found through:

- Fairs, promotions on the ground or generally in touch with listeners,

- Gaining a base with the help of prize games - upgrades with a telephone center/telemarketing,

- Sending free copies of the newspaper to potential subscribers,

- The possibility of a free order for one month - after that they automatically become a subscriber,

- Free trial period of sending mailings,

- With every news on fb - the possibility to become a subscriber.

Benefit for business users is a lower price for the annual payment (discount), while young people are interested in content supplements, entertainment, sports, crossword puzzles...

They currently have no experience with influencers and newspaper promotion.

12.   UPDATES – MAY 2024

In the following paragraphs the NEWLOCAL consortium provides **insights and refined strategies based on the advancements and experiences gained** since the initial version.

The purpose of this guidebook is to **present the best practices that the NEWLOCAL consortium has learned and applied during the project**. This first update aims to provide practical ideas and tools that consortium members have used and will continue to use in their everyday processes. This guidebook will be continually revised to reflect new insights and innovations.

In the first segment, which focuses on tech hints and tips, the consortium emphasizes the importance of seamless tool integration to enable smooth data flow and collaboration. Keeping all software and tools updated is crucial to leverage new features and security enhancements.

Consortium has successfully **developed the first versions of its applications**, that have been designed with scalability and user-friendliness in mind, ensuring that they meet the diverse needs of the users. The development followed agile practices, allowing for rapid iteration and continuous improvement. Regularly collected user feedback has been instrumental in refining the applications, ensuring they are intuitive and effective. The tools have been designed to scale with the growing needs of the project, accommodating an increasing number of users and data points.

Developing features that allow users to personalize their experience with the tools, ensuring cross-platform compatibility, and continuously improving security measures to protect data and user privacy are key areas of focus.

In the second segment, which discusses the best approach to the audience, the consortium stresses the importance of understanding the audience through thorough research to understand the demographics, needs, and preferences of the target audience. Creating detailed personas representing different segments of the audience

helps tailor content and interactions effectively. Establishing mechanisms for gathering feedback from the audience regularly is crucial to understanding their evolving needs.

With the **development of polling systems, quizzes, and the incorporation of reader comments**, the Consortium will enhance its engagement strategies. Delivering personalized content to the audience based on their interests and behavior, using multiple communication channels to reach the audience where they are most active, and fostering a sense of community by creating spaces where the audience can interact with each other, and the brand are effective strategies.

To measure impact, the consortium will utilize analytics tools to track engagement metrics such as click-through rates, time spent on pages, and conversion rates. Regularly conducting surveys and polls to gather qualitative insights from the audience and implementing A/B testing to determine which strategies and content resonate most with the audience are important practices.

In the third segment, which focuses on using interactivity and gamification, the consortium will increase interactivity through the development of quizzes and the integration of reader comments. Incorporating quizzes and surveys engages users actively and gathers valuable data. Using interactive infographics to present information in an engaging and easy-to-understand format are effective interactive elements.

Gamification techniques will include implementing a points and rewards system to motivate users to engage more with the content and tools, using badges and achievements to recognize and reward users' progress and milestones, and introducing leaderboards to create a sense of competition and encourage users to engage more actively.

To involve sponsors and advertisers, the consortium will create sponsored challenges that will integrate sponsors' products or services in a meaningful way, develop interactive and gamified content that prominently features sponsors and advertisers, and partners with sponsors and advertisers to co-create campaigns that leverage both interactive elements and gamification to boost engagement.

This updated guidebook serves as a dynamic resource to share the best practices the NEWLOCAL consortium has developed and implemented during the project so far. **By focusing on innovative tools, audience engagement, and interactive and gamified content, the consortium aims to enhance its processes and outcomes continually.** Further updates to this guidebook will be made throughout the project's implementation to ensure it remains relevant and valuable.

13.   UPDATES – OCTOBER 2024

In order for users to get the most out of the application, **the Consortium will introduce customizable settings and functionalities that enable a personalized experience**. Special emphasis will be placed on the importance of up-to-date notification, as current information and quick access to current content lead readers to visit the application several times a day.

The application will also enable **active interaction with readers through quizzes, surveys, and prize campaigns**, which encourages their involvement.

Partners believe that the importance of interaction with readers is key to the long-term use of the application, and they will try to achieve a wider base of registered users with various benefits for registered users.

Cooperation with the local environment is key to the growth and development of the platform which is why quizzes, sponsored prize games and interactive posts are included in the applications, which enable **better visibility for advertisers and additional value for users**.

With customized notifications and exclusive offers, partners will further increase engagement and attract new sponsors.

By the promotion of new tools, especially on the radio and web, namely instructions on how users can best use the application, including registration, news search, personalized notifications and interaction with content, partners will gain a significantly larger audience. Also, the ways in which employees place news through the application will play a major role in the increased number of visits to the portal.

All the partners report that they have gained a **greater popularity among the younger population**, thanks to the promotion of new tools and the applications they will present them. They are particularly motivated by the fact that they can, by sending a photo or information about an event, influence better information.

Partners have made **significant strides toward implementing the innovative tools and strategies that will shape the future of local media**. Our consortium has been actively **exploring new ways to engage our audiences and increase advertising revenue through cutting-edge technologies and interactive features**. The results so far have been promising, and the ongoing collaboration between our teams has proven to be a key driver of success.

Our **use of interactive tools, such as polls, quizzes, and user-generated content**, will for sure show a great potential in building a more engaged community. These tools are not only driving higher user participation but are also providing invaluable insights into audience preferences, allowing us to fine-tune content strategies. Additionally, gamification elements like challenges and rewards will offer a fun and rewarding way for users to interact with content, which will also attract attention from potential advertisers looking for creative, engaging ways to reach our audience.

As we move into the next phase, our focus will shift towards refining these tools, expanding our use of data analytics to personalize content even further, and deepening our partnerships with advertisers. We're also looking to share more of our findings with the wider local media community through reports and workshops, ensuring that the insights we've gained will help others in the industry thrive as well.

The ultimate goal is to ensure that these innovations are not just one-time experiments, but integrated into our everyday processes, driving both audience engagement and long-term financial sustainability.

14.   FINAL OBSERVATIONS

The local media sector faces unique challenges, particularly in building a loyal audience and generating sustainable revenue. Through the NEWLOCAL cooperative project, our consortium of local media companies has come together to develop a new approach to the audience and advertising that leverages new technology, interactivity, and gamification.

This guidebook is designed to help all consortium members and local media organizations implement innovative best practices to improve audience engagement and generate additional advertising revenue.

Following are some of our advices and "tips and tricks" for other local media organizations and other interested parties:

14.1. Tech instructions: How best to use tools

To increase audience engagement and advertising revenue, we focus on using cutting-edge technology in the form of mobile apps and interactive digital tools.

MOBILE APP

A mobile app is a powerful tool for fostering direct communication with your audience. It allows you to push content directly to their smartphones, ensuring immediate engagement. Here's how to leverage mobile apps:

- **Develop a user-friendly app**: Ensure the app is easy to navigate, with a clean and attractive interface. Focus on user experience (UX) to avoid unnecessary friction.

- **Personalized content delivery**: Use data analytics to offer personalized content based on user preferences, location, or interaction history. Push notifications can deliver real-time, tailored content to the user, driving engagement.

- **Offline accessibility**: Offer offline access to certain content. Many users appreciate being able to access media content when they don't have an internet connection.

- **Analytics and data tracking**: Use analytics tools within the app to track how users interact with your content. This helps in refining the content and understanding audience preferences.

INTERACTIVE TOOLS: POLLS, QUIZZES, AND USER-GENERATED CONTENT

Interactivity is key to increasing user engagement. These tools encourage users to participate rather than just consume content:

- **Polls and Quizzes**: Use polls and quizzes to engage users actively. They can be integrated into articles, social media posts, and even newsletters. You can also gather valuable insights about your audience's preferences and opinions.

- **Smart push notifications**: Use smart push notifications to keep users updated with the latest polls, quizzes, and breaking news, driving them back to the app or website.

- **User-generated content**: Encourage users to submit content, whether it's photos, articles, or comments. User-generated content increases engagement and builds a sense of community. It also helps diversify your content and makes it more relevant to your audience.

GAMIFICATION

Gamification can significantly enhance user engagement and make your platform more enjoyable. Here's how to incorporate it:

- **Gamified challenges and rewards**: Create challenges related to current events or media topics. Offer rewards or incentives (e.g., digital badges, exclusive content, or recognition on leaderboards) for participation.

- **Reward systems**: Implement a points or rewards system where users can earn points for interacting with content, taking quizzes, participating in polls, or sharing content on social media.

- **Game mechanics for advertisers**: Work with advertisers to develop interactive ad formats. For example, users could complete a quiz or challenge related to a product or service, with the opportunity to win a prize or discount.

14.2. Best approach to the audience

Understanding and responding to the needs of your audience is essential for building long-term engagement and success. Here are the best practices for connecting with your audience:

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

In local media, understanding your audience's needs is paramount. It's critical to develop content that resonates with them and promotes active participation. This means:

- **Segmenting your audience**: Use data analytics tools to segment your audience based on their interests, demographics, and behavior. By understanding different audience segments, you can deliver more targeted content.

- **Conduct audience surveys**: Regularly ask your audience for feedback through surveys or polls to understand their preferences, likes, and dislikes.

- **Local focus**: Local content is your competitive advantage. Focus on hyper-local news, events, and issues that matter to your community. This creates stronger connections with the audience.

PROVIDE VALUE AND RELEVANCE

To foster trust and loyalty, your content must offer value:

- **High-quality local content**: Provide in-depth coverage of local news, events, and issues. Don't just report on what's trending nationally—focus on the stories that impact your community most.

- **Timely content**: Timing is crucial. Make sure to cover events and issues as they unfold. Deliver breaking news quickly, and consider producing live content (e.g., streaming local events).

- **Offer useful services**: Beyond just news, offer practical services such as local weather, traffic updates, job listings, and more.

FOSTER COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Creating a sense of community can significantly enhance audience loyalty:

- **Social media interaction**: Actively engage with your audience on social media platforms. Respond to comments, share user-generated content, and create polls and surveys on these platforms to increase interaction.

- **Host local events**: Engage your audience through offline channels such as meetups, local events, and conferences. This builds deeper community connections and loyalty.

- **Reward loyal users**: Recognize loyal users or contributors to your platform. Offer them exclusive content or recognition, strengthening their connection to your brand.

14.3. Using interactivity and gamification to involve sponsors' and advertisers' activations

Advertisers and sponsors are key to generating revenue. It's essential to integrate them into your interactivity and gamification strategies in a way that is seamless and engaging.

SPONSORED POLLS, QUIZZES, AND COMPETITIONS

Working with sponsors, you can create interactive experiences that align with their brand:

- **Branded polls and quizzes**: Collaborate with sponsors to create branded polls or quizzes that align with their product or message. These can be featured on your app, website, or social media channels.

- **Interactive sponsored content**: Develop content that requires user participation, such as interactive stories, challenges, or games. These pieces of content can be sponsored by a company and serve as engaging advertisements.

- **Competitions with sponsorships**: Host competitions or challenges where users can participate and win prizes sponsored by advertisers. This can include quizzes, user-submitted content, or game-like experiences.

PERSONALIZED ADVERTISING

Advertisers can benefit from personalized advertising that targets users based on their behavior and preferences:

- **Targeted push notifications**: Send personalized push notifications to users based on their previous interactions, interests, and engagement patterns.

- **Sponsored content based on user data**: Create content that appeals to specific audience segments, and work with advertisers to sponsor that content. For instance, if a user frequently engages with sports content, they might be shown sponsored ads for local sports shops or fitness-related services.

GAMIFIED ADVERTISING

Gamification is not only a tool to engage users but also a valuable advertising strategy:

- **Reward-based ads**: Advertisers can offer users rewards (points, discounts, or prizes) for interacting with their ads. For example, users could participate in a brand challenge to earn discounts or exclusive offers.

- **Leaderboard and recognition**: Feature sponsor logos and branding on a leaderboard or recognition system for top users in games or challenges. This increases visibility for sponsors while keeping the user experience fun and engaging.

By incorporating these tools and practices into daily operations, consortium members of the NEWLOCAL project are able to **create more engaging, interactive, and personalized experiences for their audiences**.

This, in turn, will help **increase advertising revenue and build a sustainable business model for local media outlets in the digital age**. These **innovations will allow local**

media companies to remain competitive, strengthen their community relationships, and thrive in the evolving media landscape.

The NEWLOCAL cooperative project is a unique opportunity to leverage new technologies, innovative tools, and audience-focused strategies to improve local media operations.

By focusing on mobile apps, interactive tools, gamification, and personalized content, local media companies can foster deeper engagement, boost advertising revenue, and create lasting relationships with their audience.

Through best practices shared in this guidebook, consortium members and other local media outlets will be better equipped to navigate the challenges of the digital age while staying competitive and sustainable in the long run.

Best of luck in implementing these practices, and may your media company thrive in the evolving landscape of local media and digital transformation!