

# The Newcomer to Svendborg

How can Fyns Amts Avis become  
the new best friend for the new  
citizens in Svendborg?



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## **Abstract**

This project explores how local media can enhance their relevance for newcomers in Danish provincial municipalities, with a particular focus on Fyns Amts Avis and the town of Svendborg. Through qualitative interviews with 11 newcomers to Svendborg, the study identifies their media habits, needs, and expectations for the local media outlet. The findings indicate that the target group seeks authentic, personal, and community-oriented journalism with strong local grounding. Based on the analysis, as well as interviews with other local media and experts, a set of editorial recommendations is developed to help strengthen Fyns Amts Avis' relevance for this growing user group. In addition, the study discusses whether the results may be applicable to other local media contexts.

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# Introduction

Local journalism faces a challenging future, as a strained advertising market threatens the traditional business model and has already led to downsizing across the sector. In the case of Fyns Amts Avis, an internal study conducted in 2024 revealed that 67 percent of its print readers are older than the defined target audience (30–50-year-olds). The reality is therefore unmistakably clear: reaching this target group is essential to the newspaper’s survival. On a more positive note, the same study showed that over 80 percent of individuals aged 30–50 within Fyns Amts Avis’ coverage area (the municipalities of Svendborg, Langeland, and Ærø) reside in Svendborg Municipality. Furthermore, in recent years, Svendborg has experienced a marked influx of especially younger adults and families with children from the Greater Copenhagen area, and projections indicate that this positive demographic trend will continue through to 2037<sup>1</sup>.

As part of my fellowship at the Constructive Institute in Aarhus, I aim to examine how Fyns Amts Avis can tap into this unfulfilled potential and become relevant and timely for the 30–50-year-old newcomers arriving in Svendborg from Copenhagen.

This group constitutes the backbone of the South Funen community—and it is therefore vital to become relevant to them. These are the people who earn the money, shop locally, pay taxes to the municipality, make use of public services, and drive the local civic life.

The central research question I seek to answer is thus:  
**HOW CAN FYNs AMTS AVIS BECOME THE NEW BEST FRIEND FOR THE NEW CITIZENS IN SVENDBORG?”**

The kind of friend one naturally turns to for answers. A friend who challenges you, who is trustworthy, and who neither manipulates nor overwhelms. What will it take for Fyns Amts Avis to become that kind of friend? This is the aim for this project.

## Methods

To answer the above research question, I conducted qualitative interviews examining the media habits of 30–50-year-old newcomers to Svendborg from the Greater Copenhagen area who are **not** currently subscribers to Fyns Amts Avis. Who are they, how—and for what purposes—do they use media in general? What are their interests, how can we engage them, and what do they expect from their local media outlet? What do they believe Fyns Amts Avis should cover and be able to deliver as a local news provider? When should the newspaper challenge them, when should it support them—and what do they feel is currently missing?

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.svendborg.dk/om-kommunen/okonomi-og-noegletal/befolkningsprognose/>

In addition, I also looked at other Danish towns experiencing the same “Svendborg effect” and spoke with local media in those areas about their experiences in attracting newcomers to the local media. Finally, I reached out to both national and international local media outlets that have worked with some of the very qualities my interviewees are seeking in a local news source.

All of this has been done with the purpose of producing a final outcome that directly supports Fyns Amts Avis’ aim to gain deeper insight into the new Svendborg resident—and to provide concrete recommendations for how to achieve this. I also discuss whether my conclusions may be of value to other local media wishing to implement constructive tools, methods, and mindsets in their editorial work to make local journalism more attractive and relevant—not only to newcomers, but to the local population at large.

## Focus Area: The Newcomer to Svendborg

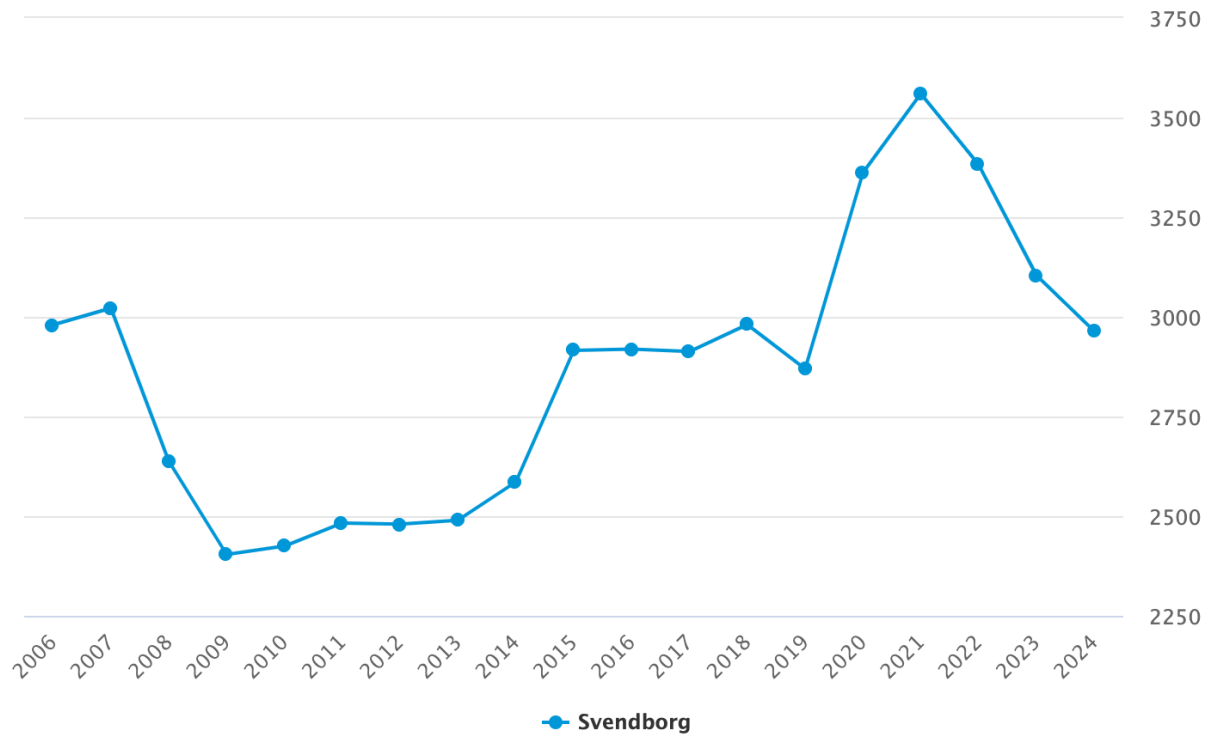
According to data from Statistics Denmark, since 2016 Svendborg has seen a net positive migration from Copenhagen Municipality—that is, more people have moved to Svendborg from Copenhagen than the other way around. It is also from 2016 onward that Copenhagen becomes the single municipality contributing the highest number of newcomers to Svendborg. Prior to that, Langeland held that top position.

The data further reveals that Svendborg’s growing popularity also applies to municipalities located near Copenhagen. For example, from 2015 to 2024, Frederiksberg and Gladsaxe have consistently ranked among the top five municipalities in terms of migration to Svendborg. During the COVID-19 years (2020–2021/22), when Svendborg experienced a migration boom, Frederiksberg even rose to second place. In the same period, Rudersdal Municipality also appeared in the top ten.

Since 2006, the number of people moving to Svendborg has ranged from 2,980 at its highest to a low of 2,404 in 2009. From that point onward, the numbers have gradually increased year by year. As noted above, migration rose significantly in 2020—from 2,870 in 2019 to 3,362 in 2020—and continued to rise into 2021, before experiencing a slight decline thereafter.

## Flytninger mellem kommuner

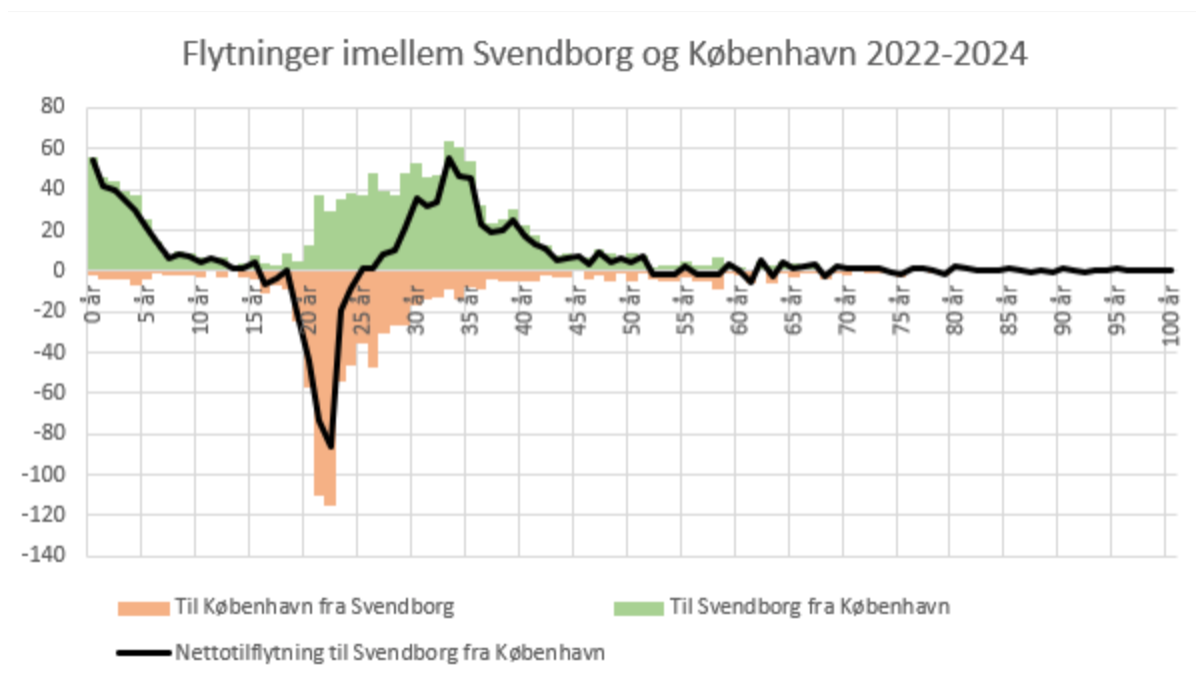
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Danmarks Statistik, [www.statistikbanken.dk/fly66](http://www.statistikbanken.dk/fly66)

Source:

<https://www.statistikbanken.dk/statbank5a/Graphics/MapAnalyser.asp?maintable=FLY66&lang=o&mapvar=TLKOMMUNE>



ACCORDING TO DATA FROM STATISTICS DENMARK FOR THE PERIOD 2022–2024, THOSE RELOCATING FROM COPENHAGEN TO SVENDBORG ARE PRIMARILY YOUNG ADULTS IN THEIR LATE TWENTIES AND EARLY THIRTIES, OFTEN ACCOMPANIED BY THEIR CHILDREN. IN CONTRAST, THOSE MOVING FROM SVENDBORG TO COPENHAGEN ARE TYPICALLY IN THEIR EARLY TWENTIES.

## “Why do so many people choose to move to Svendborg Municipality?”

*Report, Svendborg Municipality*

At the beginning of 2025, Svendborg Municipality published a survey on newcomers—a study that had also been conducted in 2021<sup>2</sup> prompted by the significant influx of newcomers to the municipality in 2020. In both surveys, the municipality maps out the motivations behind newcomers’ decisions to move to Svendborg Municipality.

<sup>2</sup>[file:///C:/Users/stigh/Downloads/Converted\\_Bilag%201.%20Rapport%20om%20osp%C3%B8rgeskemaunders%C3%B8gelse%20om%20tilflytning%20maj%202021\\_CaseNo21-16474\\_\\_170845-21%20\(2\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/stigh/Downloads/Converted_Bilag%201.%20Rapport%20om%20osp%C3%B8rgeskemaunders%C3%B8gelse%20om%20tilflytning%20maj%202021_CaseNo21-16474__170845-21%20(2).pdf)



In the most recent newcomer survey, which included 236 respondents<sup>3</sup>, following conclusions can be drawn about what this report refers to as **THE NEWCOMER TO SVENDBORG**:

The largest proportion of newcomers still arrives from the Greater Copenhagen area and belongs to the 26–40 age group. The second-largest group comes from other parts of Funen, including the surrounding islands. Eight out of ten newcomers arrive with their families. A significant majority—83 percent—relocate to the 5700 postal code area, i.e., central Svendborg, while the nearby area Skårup ranks second, receiving 7 percent of the newcomers according to the report.

The new Svendborg resident is, quite literally, new. 67 percent report that they have never lived in the municipality before, while 33 percent have. The primary reasons for choosing Svendborg are the surrounding nature, proximity to the water, and closeness to family and friends. Additionally, culture, the urban environment, and good conditions for children play a prominent role in their responses. Several participants also explicitly mention in the open-response fields that the local culture was a key factor in their decision—a factor that was also significant in the 2021 survey. Affordable housing prices also play a role, while categories such as citta slow designation, job opportunities, and educational offerings are mentioned less frequently.

The majority of newcomers intend to purchase a detached house, terraced house, or owner-occupied apartment. Furthermore, 77 percent believe they will still be living in the municipality ten years from now.

According to Svendborg Municipality's population forecast published in April 2024<sup>4</sup> Svendborg experienced between 2020 and 2021 the most significant increase in the number of newcomers, accompanied by a rise in births and a high level of residential construction. This trend continued through 2023–2024, though a slowdown has since been observed. Nevertheless, the population forecast assumes a moderately positive development in population growth through to 2037. The total population is expected to reach 60,996 by the year 2037—approximately 1,300 more than the current population.

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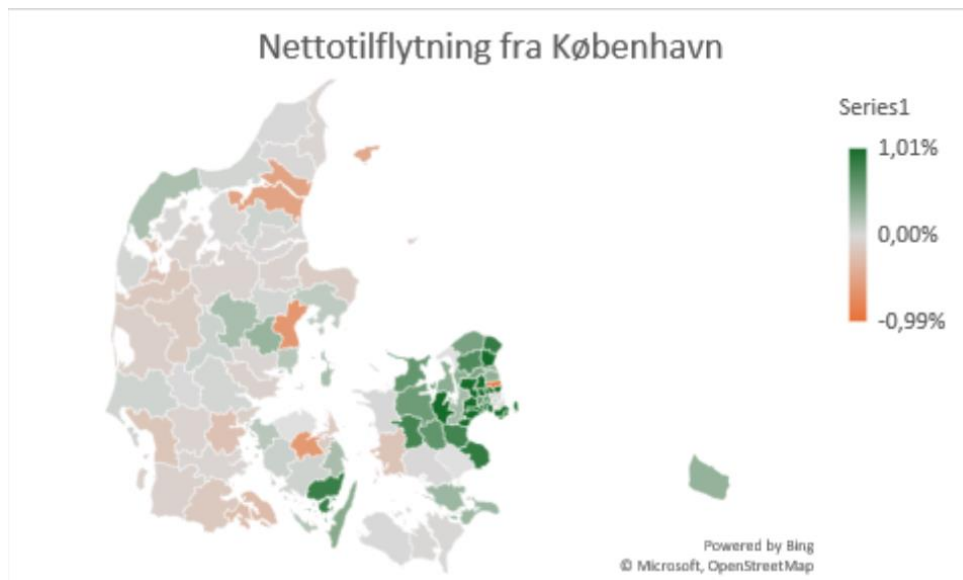
<sup>3</sup> Rapporten er endnu ikke offentliggjort. Derfor bygger afsnittet på informationer fra og interview med udviklingskonsulent i Svendborg Kommune Esther Hald Andersen, der har arbejdet med rapporten og delt nogle foreløbige resultater derfra.

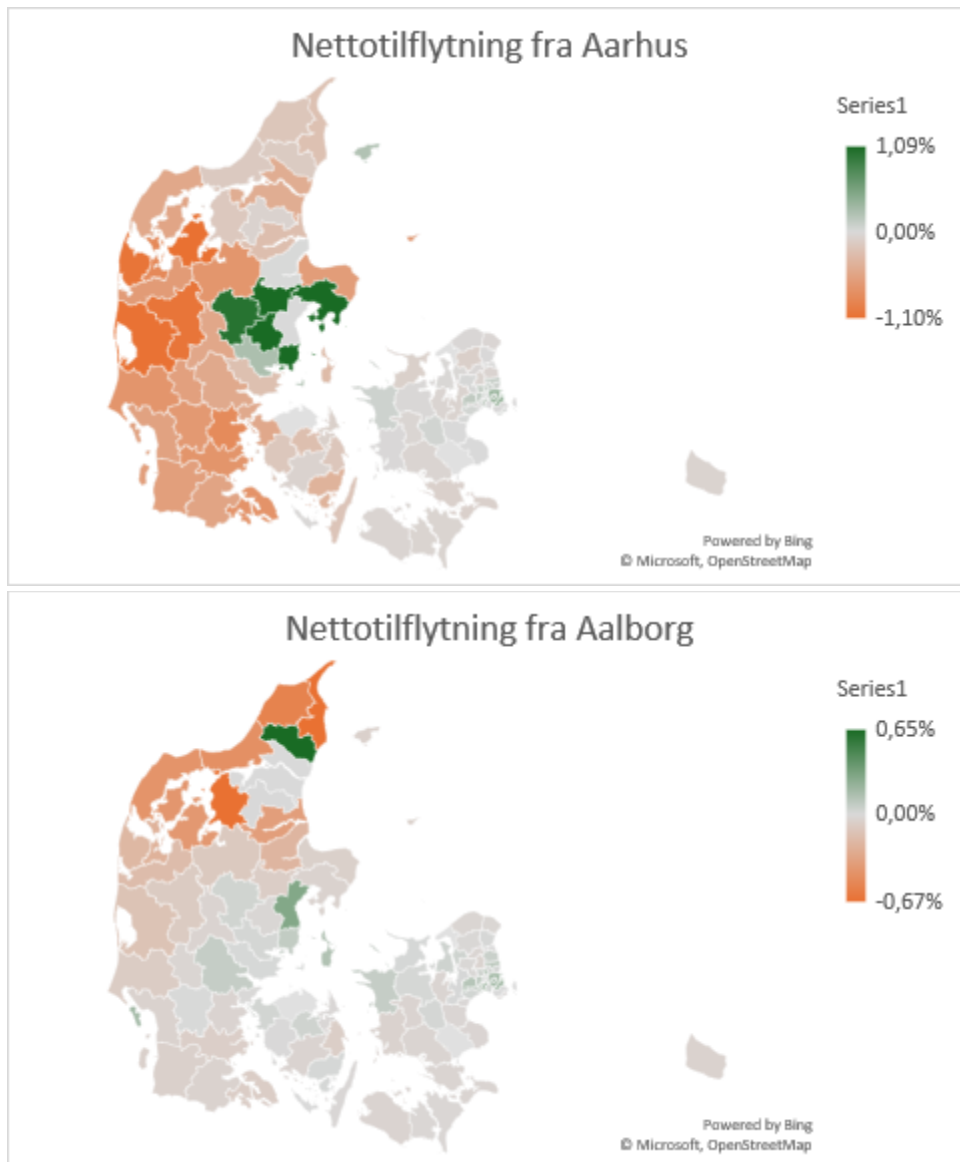
<sup>4</sup> <https://www.svendborg.dk/media/ir3nn3ct/befolkningsprognose-2024.pdf>

## Where else can the “Svendborg effect” be observed?

An extract from Statistics Denmark reveals that migration to Svendborg primarily originates from Copenhagen. The proportion is relatively high and comparable to what is typically observed in suburban commuter municipalities near major cities—often referred to as natural in-migration from their “parent city”. To a slightly lesser extent, Copenhagen residents also relocate to areas such as Bornholm, Vordingborg, Skanderborg, and Silkeborg. Thisted likewise receives slightly more newcomers from Copenhagen than it loses to the capital.

**SOURCE:** STATISTICS DENMARK. TABLE FLY66: “MIGRATIONS BETWEEN MUNICIPALITIES BY SEX, AGE, AND ORIGIN/DESTINATION MUNICIPALITY” FOR THE YEARS 2022–2024. GREEN AREAS INDICATE THAT THE MUNICIPALITY HAS GAINED MORE RESIDENTS FROM THE MAJOR CITY THAN IT HAS LOST TO IT. IN CONTRAST, ORANGE AREAS REPRESENT MUNICIPALITIES THAT HAVE LOST MORE RESIDENTS TO THE MAJOR CITY THAN THEY HAVE GAINED.





The list below provides an overview of the media outlets covering areas that are experiencing significant in-migration from three large cities in Denmark: Copenhagen, Aarhus and Aalborg. The media I have spoken with are marked in **green**.

When moving from Copenhagen people tend to relocate to:

- Bornholm (**Bornholms Tidende**)
- Vordingborg (Sjællandske)
- Thisted (**Det Nordjyske Mediehus og KunMedierne**)

When moving from Aarhus people tend to relocate to:

- Skanderborg (**Skanderborg Liv**)
- Silkeborg (**Midtjyllands Avis**)
- Læsø (Det Nordjyske Mediehus)

When moving from Aalborg people tend to relocate to:

- Brønderslev (Det Nordjyske Mediehus)
- Samsø (Samsøposten)
- Vejle (Vejle Amts Folkeblad)
- Kalundborg (Sjællandske)

When I contacted the selected media outlets, it quickly became apparent that very few had specifically worked on producing journalism targeted at newcomers. However, nearly all expressed a clear interest in doing so, as they are acutely aware that newcomers now constitute a significant portion of the population and that their audience has therefore changed. The selected media had therefore limited direct experience to share in this area. Instead, our conversations focused on how they approach journalism in their respective local contexts—since, even though they do not work explicitly with newcomers, they still keep them in mind when producing journalism and selecting stories and interview subjects.

## Midtjyllands Avis

*Interview with Brian Holst, News and Silkeborg Editor, Midtjyllands Avis, Mediehusene Midtjylland*

Although Midtjyllands Avis has not yet worked specifically with journalism targeted at the many newcomers who are also choosing to settle in Silkeborg, the editorial team has a general sense of what interests this group.

The newsroom in Silkeborg has repeatedly worked with serialized content based on selected themes. When the theme was “traffic,” it became clear that the coverage brought new and younger voices into the public debate. The series addressed issues such as traffic safety, public transportation, and the discussion about whether or not to reduce car traffic in the city. All of it was based on questions and concerns submitted by readers. The editorial team noted that many of those who submitted input were both younger and newly arrived residents.

In another series on architecture, the editorial team aimed to appeal to younger readers by focusing on housing options that fit the typical family structures within this demographic. In addition, they have had positive experiences with content such as restaurant reviews, which particularly interests readers aged 35–45.

Following News Editor Brian Holst’s fellowship at the Constructive Institute, Midtjyllands Avis has undergone—and continues to undergo—a transformation in which constructive journalism is being integrated into the newsroom’s day-to-day reporting.

The motivation for embarking on this journey stemmed from challenges that resemble those faced by Fyns Amts Avis and other traditional media: a struggling market with declining advertising revenue and increasing dominance by tech giants, combined with the difficulty of attracting new, younger subscribers.

As part of Brian Holst's fellowship, a survey was conducted for Midtjyllands Avis, and the results underscored the need for editorial development:

"The study showed, for instance, that while most people were aware of us, very few could name even a single journalist from our newsroom. So, we set a goal to more clearly define our role—who we are and what we stand for—and to take on a more active role in society. People should feel a more personal connection to us," says Brian Holst.

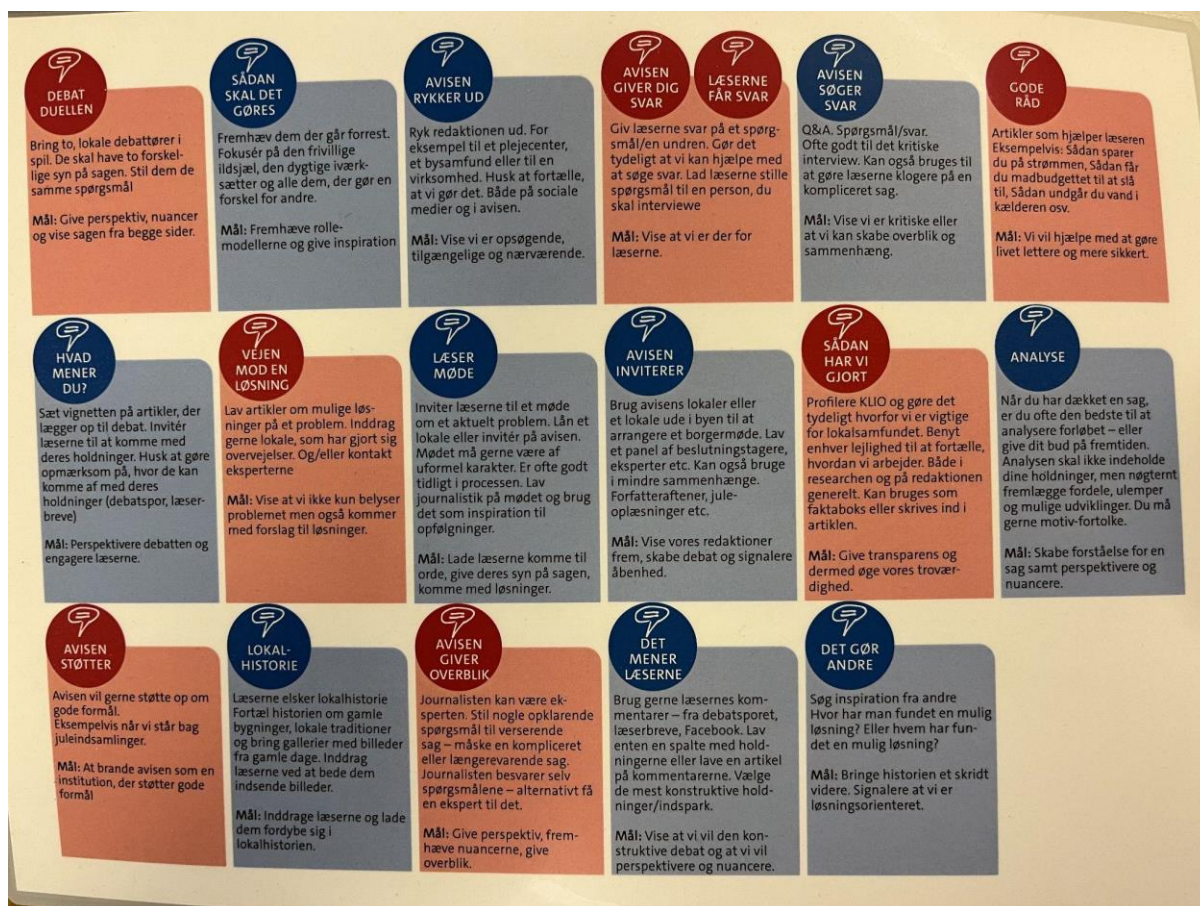
For the newspaper, it was important that the constructive approach was implemented in a manageable way— it didn't always have to take the form of large, resource-heavy projects. Instead, it should be possible to integrate constructive journalism into everyday reporting.

They began by defining what constructive journalism should mean to them and named their approach (in Danish) **KLIO**:

**Critical, Solution-Oriented, Inspiring, and Follow-Up-Focused.**

1. We want local citizens to feel closer to Midtjyllands Avis
2. We want them to participate in a civil and constructive public debate
3. We aim to build bridges—and reduce polarization
4. We want them to see us as a link to decision-makers—a connection to solutions
5. We want them to view us as a source of inspiration, entertainment, and insight into how we work journalistically
6. We want them to see us as a friend

They then developed the **KLIO Toolbox**: a collection of small (work)modules that serve as a constructive framework for structuring stories.



It became an explicit goal for Midtjyllands Avis that local citizens should be familiar with both the media outlet and the journalists behind it. This means, among other things, that journalists must present themselves as human beings and share something of themselves through their journalism. Visibility and transparency are among the tools Midtjyllands Avis uses to build recognition of its journalists and the newspaper more broadly.

“For example, in a story about trees being cut down in Silkeborg, we showed how our journalist was being sent from one authority to another in search of whoever had ordered the trees to be felled. In our podcast, we also bring in the front-page editor to explain why he makes the choices he does for the front page and what drives those editorial priorities,” says Brian Holst.

In addition to transparency and visibility in the journalistic product itself, Midtjyllands Avis also works with transparency in relation to their role as a media house. Among other initiatives, they have invited local councils into the newsroom, hosted reader events and open editorial meetings, and visited various institutions in the area to explain how the newsroom now works with constructive journalism—what the “bubbles/modules” represent and what their mission is.

“At the same time, we explain to the local community groups why we don’t spend resources reviewing exhibitions, for instance—because readers don’t read those stories. Instead, we ask to hear about their role models, for example in local associations, and we encourage them to send us tips like that. That’s the kind of content readers actually want,” says Brian Holst.

Overall, it is important for Midtjyllands Avis to remain in close contact with the local community. That is why they also engage in solution-oriented collaborations. Before launching a new thematic series, they reach out to relevant stakeholders to ask what challenges they experience on the ground.

After two years of working with constructive journalism, Midtjyllands Avis has arrived at the following conclusions, presented in a talk by News Editor Brian Holst and Editor-in-Chief Hans Krabbe:

“LONG-FORM JOURNALISM WORKS WELL.”

“READERS LOVE TO BE INVOLVED.”

“THEY ARE EAGER TO DEBATE, ATTEND EVENTS, MEETINGS, AND MORE.”

“WE HAVE SEEN AN INCREASE IN READING TIME ON THE E-PAPER.”

“THE EDITORIAL TEAM NOW ANSWERS MORE QUESTIONS ON BEHALF OF THE READERS.”

“MORE ACTIVITY ON THE OPINION PAGES AND THE WEBSITE.”

“YOUNG JOURNALISTS HAVE ALSO BECOME MORE INTERESTED IN DOING INTERNSHIPS WITH US.”

“AND—WE HAVE HAPPY EMPLOYEES!”

## SkanderborgLIV

*Interview with Johanne Jedig Weise and Jesper Rehmeier, Journalists at SkanderborgLIV, JFM*

Many young families are relocating from Aarhus to Skanderborg, a trend that has also been observed by the digital newsletter-based media outlet SkanderborgLIV. In response, the newsroom created a dedicated content area specifically aimed at these newcomers: Børneliv (“Children’s Lives”).

Within the Børneliv section, the outlet covers topics such as safe school routes, the construction of new schools, and quality and well-being assessments in the local education system. One of their most successful and widely read pieces was a comprehensive guide to



all the upcoming educational institutions and school construction projects planned in the area over the coming years.

Additionally, the editorial team has had notable success in reaching younger readers through more informal, lifestyle-oriented content. This includes testing and reviewing food products such as cream buns for Fastelavn, burgers, local breweries, pizzas and ice cream.

A key strategy for SkanderborgLIV has been bringing the journalists themselves into the spotlight. When they have created videos explaining why they are focusing on specific topics, these have performed particularly well.

“Daring to be more than just a byline photo is important. Younger audiences want something human—they want to feel there’s a person behind the journalism,” say Johanne Jedig Wejse and Jesper Rehmeier.

AT THE END OF 2023, ALL JFM MEDIA OUTLETS PARTICIPATED IN “THE WORLD’S LARGEST READER MEETING,” WHERE EACH NEWSROOM INTERVIEWED PEOPLE FROM THEIR OWN LOCAL AREA. FOR *SKANDERBORGLIV*, THIS GAVE JESPER REHMEIER AND JOHANNE JEDIG WEJSE THE INSIGHT THAT IT WAS NOT CONTENT ITSELF THAT PEOPLE WERE LACKING:

“THERE ARE ALREADY SO MANY FREE OFFERINGS OUT THERE, AND TIME IS SIMPLY IN SHORT SUPPLY. SOME PEOPLE ACTUALLY SAID IT WAS A RELIEF WHEN THE NEWSPAPER PRIORITIZED ITS EFFORTS AND FOCUSED ON QUALITY RATHER THAN QUANTITY,” THEY EXPLAIN.

## Det Nordjyske Mediehus

*Interview with Kathrine Lykkegaard Jeppesen, Editorial Director, Nordjydernes Liv, Det Nordjyske Mediehus*

At Det Nordjyske Mediehus (DNMH), they have not yet worked explicitly with newcomers as a defined target group. When the topic has involved newcomers, the content has primarily consisted of data- and statistics-driven stories: Where are people moving within the region? Where are they coming from? Which municipalities in Northern Jutland are successful in attracting new residents? However, Editorial Director Kathrine Lykkegaard Jeppesen sees clear potential in this group and notes that when the editorial team increases its presence on Instagram and produces content related to family life and healthy living, it tends to perform well—particularly among this demographic.

Currently, DNMH is initiating a process aimed at gaining a better understanding of their users and the various segments of the Northern Jutland population—through focus groups



or in-depth interviews. These segments include, for example, young families and decision-makers in the business sector.

As part of DNMH's 2027 strategy, the newsroom Nordjydernes Liv ("The Lives of Northern Jutlanders") was established in 2024 as one of four core editorial focus areas, alongside sports, business, and public affairs. The team consists of 4–5 journalists and primarily produces content centred on lifestyle and family life. From the outset, it was important to define a narrow and clearly articulated target group to ensure more effective topic selection and audience targeting. The defined audience is families with children—especially those with young children or school-aged children. While this group overlaps with the newcomer segment, the journalism is not produced specifically with newcomers in mind.

"Stories about seeking village life or moving from a big city spark broad, universal interest among us—not just among newcomers in Klitmøller, but also among other Northern Jutlanders who can relate," says Kathrine Lykkegaard Jeppesen.

According to Jeppesen, the content resembles opening a copy of the Danish lifestyle and women's magazine *Femina*:

"... we believe we have a unique editorial relevance in a Northern Jutland context. Life here isn't lived the same way it is in Copenhagen, where *Femina* is produced. Here, people typically live in larger homes, commute longer distances, and have different perspectives. That gives us a valid reason to portray private life from our regional point of view," she explains.

The newsroom has covered topics such as relationships, living arrangements, and ultra-processed foods. The constructive journalistic approach is a deliberate choice—especially in light of a target group that increasingly opts out of news because it negatively affects their mood. At Nordjydernes Liv, the team always aims to offer a solution when highlighting a problem.

"We see strong audience responses when we avoid dwelling on problems and leaving our readers feeling abandoned. We want them to feel uplifted and empowered after engaging with our content," says Kathrine Lykkegaard Jeppesen.

In addition to the positive feedback on their constructive approach, the newsroom has also experienced that breaking with the ideal of strict objectivity and daring to show their own personalities—even vulnerability—resonates well with the audience.

On [nordjyske.dk](https://nordjyske.dk), Nordjydernes Liv is the second most-read content category, surpassed only by business reporting.

# Bornholms Tidende

*Interview with Tommy Kaas (Editor), Frida Flinch (Nature Journalist), and Martin Søndergaard Jensen (Business Journalist), Bornholms Tidende*

In connection with Editor Tommy Kaas's fellowship at the Constructive Institute in 2023/2024, a user survey was conducted involving 500 Bornholm residents. The survey asked what readers appreciated about Bornholms Tidende and what they would like to see more of.

Based on the results of this survey, two new editorial positions were created: one focused on nature reporting and an additional position covering business.

In the area of nature, the newsroom is still experimenting with various formats, but the data confirms that readers indeed show strong interest in nature-related content. Frida Flinch, the nature journalist at Bornholms Tidende, explains that she has been covering the "Green Tripartite Agreement" a lot, particularly due to Bornholm's special environmental status. She is frequently in contact with the Danish Nature Agency, which informs her about upcoming changes to the local natural landscape. She also regularly speaks with the island's many nature guides and produces articles on seasonal developments—such as what to look for in nature during May, or recommended Easter hikes.

This editorial focus offers some clear advantages:

"This beat is a perfect opportunity to get away from the desk and outside, which I would really like to do more of. I'd love to develop some on-location concepts where readers know what to expect—such as going into nature with some semi-public figures from the island and letting them show off their favorite spot or hidden gem," says Frida Flinch.

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"It works really well when I include, for example, local farmers who explain how certain political decisions directly affect them. Nature and climate topics can quickly become very political and process-oriented, so I try to avoid using too many heavy, lengthy, and abstract terms like 'the Green Tripartite Agreement'—because no one clicks on that."

**Frida Flinch, journalist, Bornholms Tidende**

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Business journalism is the highest-performing content category at Bornholms Tidende. Whether the story is about a shop opening or closing, financial reporting, or company profiles, it consistently performs well. However, Editor Tommy Kaas emphasizes that their subscribers clearly appreciate when the newsroom puts in the effort and prioritizes speaking with business owners—rather than merely publishing automatically generated financial summaries. Even when such articles become somewhat longer, this has not led to a drop in reader engagement.

“If it's 15,000 well-written characters, people will read it to the end,” says Tommy Kaas.

For that reason, the financial stories at Bornholms Tidende are never generated by automated tools. The newsroom always prioritizes speaking with the business owners, as they consistently find that there is a meaningful story to tell.

At the moment, the newly hired business journalist, Martin Søndergaard Jensen, is writing many financial stories due to peak season for company accounts, but he also has broader ambitions for the business beat:

“A series on the local labour market would be relevant, because it's really under pressure here. The biggest problem is the shortage of workers—and it's only going to get worse. I also think it would be interesting to explore why it's actually great to run a business on Bornholm, even though the logistics can clearly be a bit of a hassle in terms of distribution,” he explains.

The user survey also revealed another key insight. While the editorial team—according to Tommy Kaas—had expected that readers might complain about article length, this turned out not to be the case.

“We don't have any rules saying news stories must be no longer than 3,000 characters, or that a story can't exceed a certain length. One clear change is that we now focus less on producing a high volume of content and more on delivering well-crafted and insightful journalism,” the editor notes.

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*“Everything we do comes from a love for Bornholm. It may sound a bit local-patriotic, but we genuinely want to contribute to making the Bornholm community better. And we welcome approaches that involve constructive solutions to problems—or an external perspective on our*

## KunMedierne

*Interview with Katrine Hedegaard, Editor-in-Chief, KunMors and KunThy, KunMedierne*

At the two KunMedia outlets, KunMors and KunThy, newcomers have not yet been examined or addressed as a specific target group. However, this is certainly something Editor-in-Chief Katrine Hedegaard is already considering:

“I often think about how we, through KunThy, can reach younger readers—especially in places like Klitmøller. It’s truly an area that—probably much like Svendborg—is attracting the ‘cultural elite’ from Copenhagen and Aarhus,” says Katrine Hedegaard.

Despite not yet producing journalism specifically aimed at newcomers, the two media outlets remain relevant to this discussion. Their hyperlocal presence and approach are deeply valued by the local population—evidenced in part by a steady subscriber base.

At KunMedierne a part of the editorial strategy is to celebrate the region and the people who live, work, and engage in the local community—with the hope that this will help make Thy and Mors more attractive places to settle. One way they do this is through a tone that is attentive, friendly, and constructive. Indeed, it is the ambition of the media house that journalism across the two platforms should be constructive in nature.

This ambition was supported by an analysis carried out by the Constructive Institute in early 2025, which showed that 28.5 percent of content on KunMors qualified as constructive. This figure exceeds what has been observed in both national and other local media outlets.<sup>5</sup>

“For example, we’ve covered some wolf attacks in our area, and of course that’s the kind of story that could easily be sensationalized to stir up fear—but that’s not the approach we want to take. We aim to present different perspectives and maintain a respectful, friendly tone. If you read our coverage, you won’t necessarily get the news the moment it happens, because we prefer to take a more thorough approach, producing something more carefully crafted—even if that means we’re not the first to publish,” explains Katrine Hedegaard, who senses a

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<sup>5</sup><https://kunmedierne.dk/mors/analyse-kunmors-er-et-meget-konstruktivt-medie/>

growing demand for journalism that also highlights where things are going well—stories about progress, emerging initiatives, and people doing things in new and inspiring ways.

Much of their inspiration comes from Zetland, even though KunMedierne operates with far fewer resources, both in terms of staff and budget. Nonetheless, Katrine Hedegaard hopes to follow Zetland's example by involving readers even more—particularly as a guide to determine what kinds of content the newsroom should and shouldn't produce.

“I would much rather conduct user surveys than start tracking performance metrics for our journalism. I don't think measuring contributes to a healthy work environment. It's important that our journalists don't feel pressured. They should be free to pursue stories they're passionate about, not just ones that are expected to 'perform.' And we're not seeing any drop in subscriptions as a result of the way we work now,” she says.

## Findings from the Qualitative Research

**Who:** The defined target group for Fyns Amts Avis is individuals aged 30–50. This is therefore also the age range applied in this study. However, I have focused exclusively on speaking with newcomers from the Greater Copenhagen area, and a requirement for participation was that they are not current subscribers to Fyns Amts Avis.

**How:** A total of 11 interviewees were recruited by reaching out to various co-working communities in Svendborg with a high concentration of newcomers among their members and daily office users. Additionally, I posted calls for participants on Facebook.

In this project, interviewees have been partially anonymized; only their gender and age are indicated alongside quotations. “M” denotes male and “F” denotes female.

The full interview guide can be found in Appendix 1.

## Media and News Consumption

Overall, the informant group does not display particularly diverse media consumption habits. Most access only a few different media sources during a typical day or week, and only a few use more than two different sources daily. In addition to traditional media such as DR and TV2, the group also considers social media platforms—such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, and Reddit—as legitimate sources of news.

When it comes to media subscriptions, the pattern is similarly limited. Those who do subscribe typically have just one subscription, and for the majority (6 out of 11), that subscription is to the Danish digital media Zetland. Most of these six Zetland subscribers access the platform on a daily basis. Although their daily usage time is limited—and nearly nonexistent during weekends—most have been long-term subscribers and have no intention of cancelling their subscription. In contrast, loyalty toward other media outlets mentioned by the informants, such as Berlingske, Weekendavisen, and Politiken, is weaker; they tend to shift in and out of subscriptions. Often, it is a good promotional offer that prompts them to subscribe to these outlets temporarily.

The informants' primary media usage occurs during weekdays—especially weekday mornings, which is when most consume their preferred news content. On weekends, media usage drops significantly, as time is typically spent with their children. Only one informant reported having more time for news consumption on weekends, as her children have moved out (F46).

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*M34: I follow the news a bit during the week, but I don't spend more time on it over the weekend.*

*F42: I don't get around to listening to anything at all on the weekends.*

*M37: On weekends, it's all about the kids. I don't have time to read the news then.*

*F36: I don't really use it much on weekends, because that's when we spend time with the children.*

*F46: I have more time on weekends.*

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Most informants prefer to access their media digitally—particularly in audio format—and it is primarily during their commute to and from work that they put on their news content. Several in the group listen to Zetland's morning news podcast Helicopter, which offers a brief daily overview of national and international affairs since the previous day.

Later in the day, when they return to the media, it is typically to read or listen to an in-depth or explanatory article.

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*F42: The five minutes in the morning on my way to work, and when I walk the dog in the afternoon—that's when I have time. In the afternoon, I might listen to an extra article because I have the time while walking the dog.*

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The total amount of time the informant group spends on news media is relatively limited, and most of them mention a general sense of time pressure in their daily lives as a key factor influencing their media habits. Work and family life take up a substantial portion of their day, which means that news media often become a lower priority—something they listen to on the go or while multitasking, such as during commutes or while performing other tasks.

For those who feel pressed for time, there is a strong awareness of how that time is spent when engaging with news content. Even if it's just five minutes here and there, they want that time to be meaningful. Rather than being bombarded with short, fast-paced updates, they prefer content that deepens their understanding, offers thorough explanations, and provides inspiration. One informant mentioned that, for him, the relevance of a news article must already be evident in the headline—precisely because there are so many choices and so little time to spare (M40).

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*M34: I'm very aware that my time is limited, so I try to focus on what makes sense and adds value for me. I want to feel that the time I spent was worth it—that it was engaging.*

*F46: Our time is limited, and it's a waste of time if your newspaper doesn't give me something in return.*

*F42: The topics and articles have to be useful to me—otherwise, I won't bother reading them.*

*M40: There are so many headlines out there, so yours need to grab me immediately. I need to instantly understand why I should spend my time reading this particular article.*

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In addition to a lack of time being the primary reason why most informants do not spend more time with news media, several also mention that the current media landscape has caused them to reconsider their media habits and, as a result, reduce their overall news consumption. One informant even refers to himself as a ‘news avoider’ (M40), while another has deliberately scaled back his media use because he found the news overwhelmingly negative, disconnected from his everyday life, and ultimately unfulfilling. He expressed a desire for more hopeful and uplifting news stories.

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*M34: In general, I feel like the media either try to provoke, create fear, or present things in a black-and-white way.*

*M37: There was a period when everything was about Trump, and that made me realize I needed more hopeful news. I'm actively trying to distance myself from the sensationalist news flow because it doesn't give me anything of value.*

*M40: I would probably call myself a news avoider. The media landscape contributes to a constant sense of stress for me because there's always a stream of stories about problems I can't do anything about. That's why I shield myself from knowing too much about what's going on in the world.*

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As previously mentioned, the informant group wants to gain something meaningful from the time they devote to media. But what kind of content are they actually looking for? The following section addresses this question.

## Audience Content Preferences

Before exploring their content preferences, all informants were asked whether they found it relevant to have a local media outlet covering their area. On this point, there was unanimous agreement: all respondents answered yes—there should be a local media outlet. In fact, several informants expressed a sense of obligation to support their local newspaper.

Almost all participants emphasized that they expect something more—and something different—for their money than “just” traditional local journalism. Several expressed a desire and hope that Fyns Amts Avis could create a sense of community for people on South Funen—a shared space they could feel proud to be part of, one that connects and unites residents. Multiple informants pointed to Zetland as a successful example of this.



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*F45: Zetland has a visual identity and has built a brand that makes people proud to carry a tote bag with the Zetland logo on it. It shows that people are genuinely proud to be part of that media community. I think it's a shame I don't have that same feeling about your newspaper, because I actually feel obligated to support you—but I just don't want to, because I don't feel I get anything out of it or that you're relevant to me.*

*F36: I think a local media outlet has great potential. Something that can bring people together and create a sense of community is really important to me.*

*M40: Build a community—because that's what creates loyalty. It would be great to have a local newspaper I could relate to more personally, one that informs, asks questions, and explores what kind of knowledge it can help me gain so that I can make a difference.*

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For the informant group, the path to feeling part of a community is, in part, shaped by how the sender—in this case, the journalist—presents their work and is present within the journalism itself.

The personal presence of the journalist and the use of a personal storytelling technique are elements that several informants find engaging, compelling, and, in fact, crucial to whether they continue using a particular media outlet. When a journalist dares to use their own voice and appears in the reporting with genuine curiosity and personality, it fosters a sense of connection with the journalist. Informants perceive this as a mark of quality and credibility, which in turn strengthens their loyalty and likelihood of returning to the media. One informant (F36) even noted that when the storytelling is personal and the language is accessible, she no longer pays attention to what the article is about—she simply listens or reads because she trusts and enjoys the experience.

In addition to language and narrative style helping the informants feel they “know” the journalists, several also highlight the positive impact of having the journalists themselves narrate their own articles.

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*M40: Give me a personal connection to the journalists. Let them narrate their own articles, and make it possible for me to follow them so I know*

*when Journalist X has written something new. Zetland uses a personal tone in both headlines and body text. They're not neutral—and that actually makes them more credible in my eyes. They're also really good at quickly telling me why a particular article is relevant to me. I get that just from the headline. The fact that Zetland refers to me as a member also makes a difference.*

*F42: I actually feel more distant from you—even though you're right here in my local area—than I do from Mikkel at Zetland when I'm listening to him in my headphones. It's like you get under their skin, and you feel as though you know them—especially when they say something like, "There was the most beautiful sunrise as I cycled in this morning to make this episode." They speak to me in a way I can understand—even when the topics are complex. They made the mink scandal understandable. They manage to make national issues feel personal.*

*M37: Anything can potentially be interesting if it's written by the right person. It's all about the storytelling style. I really appreciate it when journalists include themselves in the articles.*

*F36: The topics I engage with are actually very diverse. Zetland's storytelling technique means that even when I'm not interested in the subject, I still listen.*

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As previously mentioned, there is broad consensus among the informant group that they seek useful and relevant knowledge. For this group, "useful" refers to content that enhances their understanding, provides explanations, goes into depth, inspires action, and is rooted in their immediate surroundings. The latter is especially important in terms of being introduced to people and projects that exist, thrive, and make a difference in and for their local community.

More curiosity-driven "how" and "why" questions. That is how one informant best described the kind of content he wants to read: How do we develop the area we live in? Who are the people living here? How and where can I best support local initiatives? What kinds of initiatives, organizations, and networks exist in my area?

Several informants noted that they do not expect Fyns Amts Avis to provide basic service information such as ferry updates—they prefer to seek that out elsewhere. Moreover, several in the group emphasized that, as newcomers, they cannot be expected to already know the area. As a local media outlet, Fyns Amts Avis should not assume that newcomers, for

example, are aware of where the best nature experiences are, who the mayor is, or what he has accomplished during his time in office.

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*M34: We've had a mayor in office for 8–12 years—what has he actually done? What does his day-to-day look like? A lot of people complain about the lack of playgrounds, but where are the playgrounds located? And where could new ones be added? Are any on the way? These are the kinds of things we talk about.*

*F45: I want to be inspired or able to delve deeper into something. I'm not interested in overviews or content that jumps all over the place.*

*M34: How are we developing the region we live in? Who are the people who live here? I want deep dives—both political and human-focused: What organizations, relationships, and initiatives are taking place in my area? I'm more interested in longer-form analyses and interviews—even with the quirky types, like Karen, who invented X or does Y.*

*M37: I want to read about something I can actually act on. Like the story of the local flower seller I can go down and support.*

*F36: The really specific service updates—like ferry schedules—I'd look for elsewhere. But I don't know where to find information about the more long-term things: Are there projects in Svendborg Municipality I should know about? Any new nature areas? New playgrounds? Information for all of us who've moved here. You can't assume we already know. Even though I've lived here for four years, I still feel like there's so much we don't know about. Sometimes I'll think, "Wow, there's this amazing forest nearby—and we never even considered going there."*

*M34: I get breaking news updates from other sources. I'd never visit Fyns Amts Avis to check if the Svendborgsund Bridge is closed.*

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Among the more specific topics the informant group would like to read about business, family and parenting, human-interest stories, as well as nature and culture consistently emerge.

**Business** is an area of particular interest to many in the group, as most have moved to Svendborg either with an entrepreneurial dream or already running their own independent

business. Several mention that what makes Svendborg unique is precisely the fact that it is possible to live as an entrepreneur here—and they are therefore eager to read stories about others who have taken the same leap. They are especially interested in stories about smaller businesses that are not the typical large economic players in the local community. Instead, they are drawn to companies that think in terms of triple bottom lines—where profit is not the sole focus—and that have made notable contributions to areas such as green transition or social responsibility.

They are looking for stories about people who create—rather than just standard business reporting about shops opening or closing. One informant even suggested that the newspaper could play a role in bridging the gap between established and new businesses—perhaps by facilitating an award to honor Svendborg residents and/or initiatives that help put Svendborg on the map.

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*M34: What interests me is a deeper understanding of business. Why did the flower shop close? Why are there so many vacant storefronts right now?*

*F45: I feel like you mostly just report whenever something opens or closes. I don't care about that.*

*M45: What's unique about Svendborg is that it's actually possible to live here as an entrepreneur—but that's not the story that's usually told. The typical narrative focuses on alpha-male business types and big companies making lots of money. But there are also smaller businesses or initiatives that many take for granted, which are also important driving forces in Svendborg. Profit isn't the central focus for everyone.*

*Personally, I've found it liberating not to talk about career all the time since moving here. Could you act as a bridge between the new and the more established businesses? We're all proud to live in Svendborg. Could you create an award and celebrate the initiatives that bring people in Svendborg together and/or put the town on the map? I want to read about businesses that think in terms of more than just profit—and about people who are out there creating things.*

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All informants with children expressed a desire for articles addressing **family and parenting**. Their suggestions range from topics such as daycare staff ratios and questions surrounding the culture of local sports clubs—particularly the balance between community

and elite performance—to how to reduce screen time for children. A recurring theme is that the informants seek a more inquisitive and reflective approach to these topics.

For example, when discussing sports and extracurricular activities, their focus is not on which sport is most popular in town, but rather on questions like: Is the high level of ambition at SFB Football actually beneficial for the children? What is the coaching culture like? In short, they want journalism that critically explores the values embedded in local institutions.

In addition, several informants expressed a desire for inspiration on what they can do and participate in with their children in the local area. Many emphasized once again that they are new to the region and are still getting to know it. What may seem obvious to local journalists—such as where the best playgrounds or forests are located—is far from obvious to newcomers.

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*M45: How do we get the kids away from their screens? It's something we're all struggling with. You could cover it through articles and maybe even an event where people come to get good advice.*

*F42: Is it really good for our kids that there are such high ambitions at SFB Football? That's something I talk about with my friends. Is the coaching culture healthy? What's the atmosphere like around gymnastics?*

*F36: Where can we find community dinners, good playgrounds, fun things to do on weekends? Is there children's theatre anywhere? That's what I'm interested in right now. Are there any new nature areas? New playgrounds? We need information for all of us who are new to the area—you shouldn't assume we already know. There's a lot you don't know when you move here from somewhere else.*

*F34: I'm mostly focused on things I can do with my kids.*

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**Human-interest stories** are also a recurring theme among more than half of the informants. They want to read about the people they live among—both the well-known and the less familiar. Those who make a difference in the local community, and those who have made life choices that differ from the mainstream. A few also mention that they enjoy listening to the podcast ‘Svendborgs Stemmer’, in which the host interviews various local residents and paints a portrait of who they are.

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*F45: I find it interesting to read about the people who live here. What brought them here? What are they involved in? It helps create a sense of community. Svendborgs Stemmer is great because it puts a face to the people we share this town with. What do they think about life, and what have they been through? What kind of society are we part of, and what are their goals with what they're doing?*

*F42: I really enjoy inspiring human-interest stories. The portraits in Svendborgs Stemmer are compelling and relevant because these are people we live alongside.*

*F36: I especially like longer-form audio stories that introduce some of the people who live here. I enjoy when the reporting takes you into people's homes—like a radio documentary.*

*M45: I'd love to get to know some of the driving forces in the town and hear about the people we pass on the street.*

*M37: There are a lot of people living here, and I'm sure they have all kinds of incredible stories—and I want to hear them.*

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Alongside nature, culture is the primary reason why nearly all informants chose to move to Svendborg. And **culture** is also a subject they wish to read more about in their local media. As with topics related to family and parenting, some informants express a desire for guidance on cultural events and experiences. At the same time, they are also interested in in-depth articles that explore Svendborg's cultural life.

They want curious and reflective journalism that investigates the visions for local institutions such as the theater, provides insight into cultural organizations from the inside, highlights the people—especially volunteers—who make cultural life possible, and asks critical questions about the cultural future of the town. As one informant put it: they would like to see “an inside-out approach.”

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*F42: Harders has become a nationally recognized venue, and it's exciting to follow—but what kind of work goes on behind the scenes? Who are all the volunteers? What does it mean for the future? What's*

*happening at BaggårdTeatret now that it's trying to appeal to more than just the older generation? What's their strategy? I'd like to see more "inside-out" journalism instead of "outside-in."*

*M49: Cover culture in a way that shows me what we're capable of here on South Funen. I'd much rather read a story about why a particular event matters and what it offers than see a photo report of the parade. I want to understand how it brings me closer to fulfilling my responsibilities as a citizen of South Funen.*

*F45: I'd really like to read about what's happening around here—so I can keep up with what's going on. As newcomers, it's not a given that we just know these things.*

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The idea of the local media outlet delving into a selected theme is something most informants also mention positively. Preferably, this should be a topic that is not necessarily driven by the current news cycle or already being covered by all other media outlets. It is also worth noting that several informants had come across Fyns Amts Avis in connection with the school-themed series published in the autumn of 2024.

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*M45: The fact that you select certain issues yourselves—topics that aren't necessarily "newsy newsy"—is something that appeals to me. Something where you could combine written journalism with events. I hope you'll dare to tell the smaller stories too. Stories that help foster pride. That you have a mission to improve the community.*

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Since none of the participants in the qualitative study were subscribers to Fyns Amts Avis, I presented them with a typical daily edition of the newspaper along with an overview of our editorial focus areas and asked for their reactions. All respondents pointed out that they found the number of stories to be excessive and expressed a preference for fewer, more in-depth articles. The idea that this might also result in longer pieces did not deter them—in fact, one participant remarked that shorter articles reminded him of content he could just as easily find on the social media platform Reddit.

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*M34: I'm not the type who visits a news website every day, so it wouldn't matter to me if the site were constantly updated with small stories—like the police stopping a drunk cyclist over the weekend. I honestly don't care about that.*

*M34: Less content, but with more depth. Challenging and demanding articles—otherwise, it feels like a waste of my time.*

*M37: With the current publishing frequency, it seems like quantity is valued over substance. I'd much rather see fewer, longer stories where you can sense that the writer is passionate about the subject. If an article is short, I won't bother reading it—I could just read the same thing on Reddit.*

*F36: I'd get the quick "update me" news elsewhere. A short item saying that Jonna is opening a cheese shop wouldn't interest me. But if there were a great angle and a longer piece about her and the shop, then I'd be drawn in. That's the kind of story I want to read—and that's why I don't need it delivered instantly.*

*F45: I do like local content, but it has to have substance. It needs to feel closer and more meaningful—not just faster and faster.*

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## More than a newspaper

Almost none of the informants were aware that Fyns Amts Avis has a podcast, but they reacted positively when told about it. All agreed that it is a good decision for the newspaper to be present in the audio space.

When it comes to preferences for audio content, opinions were more divided. Some favored brief news overviews, while others preferred serialized formats. However, what they all had in common was a desire for unique, locally rooted content on topics they wouldn't be able to find elsewhere. Several also expressed interest in inspiring stories about people in the local community—ideally told outside the traditional studio setting, with the host meeting people on location.

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*M40: Whether it's a Monday roundup that summarizes the past week's local news in 20 minutes, or a serialized format, the topic needs to be*



*relevant and timely for us here on South Funen. And the journalist should take the listener by the hand and explain why this matters.*

*M34: I'd find it really interesting if you went out and visited relevant people in the community—kind of like old-school radio documentaries.*

*F42: In audio, I like a good overview format.*

*F36: I especially enjoy longer audio stories where you meet some of the people who live here. I like it when the reporter actually visits them.*

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When asked whether Fyns Amts Avis should be more than just a provider of written local news—specifically, whether it should also host events—the majority of the informant group expressed strong interest. However, several participants emphasized the importance of relevance in the content of such events, particularly since they would likely take place in the evening and thus compete directly with time typically reserved for family or community activities. One informant (M34) suggested that this challenge could be addressed by organizing combination events that include both a presentation and dinner—or by offering a packed meal to take home for the next day.

Several informants noted that events become more appealing when they offer more than just a lecture—for instance, by incorporating food or music.

Nearly all participants expressed a desire for events that allow for active participation rather than passive attendance. While a few were discouraged by the idea of formal debates or confrontational discussions, they were generally open to more inspiration-based and solution-oriented formats.

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*M34: I would attend if it were something that created value and allowed me to ask questions and engage. It shouldn't just be informative. As a family with young children, we don't have a lot of spare time—but if you offered dinner, or even a packed lunch to take home for the next day, that could make it appealing.*

*F36: As a newcomer, I'm interested in building a network and getting to know people, and it would be great if you could create a space for that—specifically for newcomers.*

*F45: I'm not into traditional debates with heated arguments—that makes me cringe. But I would attend talks where you actually give something to the audience.*

*M40: If it's something that addresses a real problem, I'd be interested. You could host a series of dialogue salons where citizens help brainstorm and suggest solutions to issue X.*

*M34: I'd definitely attend if you covered topics relevant to the local community.*

*F42: If I were to choose to go to an event, it would really have to be relevant to my life. The time you're competing with is time spent with my children—or going to a concert or something similar.*

*F34: I actually think it's pretty cool when a local media outlet takes on that role and uses the skills journalists have.*

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Among the topics mentioned by informants as potentially interesting for them to attend and engage with are the following:

- SCREEN-FREE CHILDHOOD
- LIFE–WORK BALANCE
- ENTREPRENEURSHIP ON SOUTH FUNEN
- WHO IS THE MAYOR?
- DEVELOPMENT OF FYN'S AMTS AVIS
- NEWCOMER NETWORK
- A NETWORK WHERE LONGTIME AND NEW SVENDBORG RESIDENTS MEET

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*M34: Again, it would be interesting to hear about the mayor. What has he actually accomplished? What does his everyday life look like? For many of us newcomers, he's still "new." Why was he re-elected? What are his plans?*

*F36: I wouldn't prioritize attending some local political event where people argue about whether a bike path should go left or right. Debate*

*and confrontation are a big turn-off. If it's filled with inspiration or solutions, that's much better.*

*F45: If you could make local politics more accessible and easier to understand, that would interest me. I don't seek it out myself, because it's often too complex and just full of argument—but I actually do think it would be interesting to know what's happening at a broader level and what the politicians are working on.*

*F42: You could look into what we newcomers from Copenhagen have in common and create events around that. Many of us are stepping out of the hamster wheel; we're thinking about how to approach screen time and parenting, many of us are entrepreneurs, and we really care about life—work balance.*

*M40: What if we gathered to develop Fyns Amts Avis? I'd love to help shape and contribute. You could also take FAA out to local community halls and choose a hyperlocal issue to facilitate a conversation around. Ultra-processed foods? No thanks. Slurry and water pollution? Yes—because that's a hyperlocal problem. Ask questions and involve the audience: what do we do about it?*

*F34: I'm a newcomer, so I'm also in the process of rediscovering where I come from. That's why I'm open to just about anything—I need to build a new network down here.*

*M45: Screen time and kids. Couldn't you host an event where people come to get some real advice?*

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## Willingness to Pay

After discussing content preferences, it naturally became relevant to clarify a crucial question: Would the informant group actually be willing to pay for it?

The answer, it turns out, is yes. In fact, several were pleasantly surprised to hear the (low) price of a digital subscription. However, for this group, the decision to pay is not solely about gaining access to local news content. Rather, it is about supporting something greater—a meaningful project they want to identify with, where they do not feel like “just” consumers.

As one informant put it:

“We’ve become a bit lazy as consumers because we’re used to so much free content. So it would take something more for me to pay for it. Feeling like I am part of a community would definitely help” (F36).

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*M40: I want to feel—like I do with Zetland—that my subscription supports a good cause and an important project. I want to feel that I’m part of something with a clear identity and purpose. I don’t want to feel like I’m “just” a consumer. I’m not subscribing for my own sake, but for the sake of Fyns Amts Avis and South Funen.*

*F36: If I were to pay, I think I’d need to feel that I was getting something extra—not just stories. If I knew that, as a subscriber, I also had access to events or could go to a specific café and get coffee at half price, that would make it more appealing. I think there needs to be something extra. Otherwise, I could just go on Facebook and find the same information. We’ve become a bit lazy as consumers because we’re used to having so much free content. So it would take something more for me to pay. Feeling like I’m part of a community would help.*

*F34: I actually want to support the local newspaper, and I do feel a sense of obligation to contribute.*

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## The Visual Impact

The informant group was also asked to reflect on the visual identity of Fyns Amts Avis. Specifically, they were presented with both the newspaper’s website and its print edition and asked what thoughts and associations these formats evoked. The purpose of these questions was to gain insight into what the target group values—and, conversely, is put off by—when it comes to visual expression, and why it matters how we “look” as a media outlet.

Throughout the interviews, it became clear that for many informants, the visual appearance of a media outlet they subscribe to does matter, as they often identify personally with the brand. As one informant explained:

“You identify with the whole look, and for instance Zetland has a clear visual identity—and has built a brand around it—where people are proud to carry a tote bag with the Zetland logo on it” (F45).

Many informants described Fyns Amts Avis' website as cluttered and outdated by blocks of text, static images, and a lot of annoying ads, which they found confusing and visually overwhelming. The absence of multimodal journalistic products contributes to what they perceive as a dusty or stale image, particularly because they are used to encountering such formats on many other media platforms. As a result, Fyns Amts Avis' site is not a place that draws them in—or one where they want to spend any significant amount of time.

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*M45: I miss multimodal formats where text, photos, video, and audio are combined.*

*M37: The site feels uninviting and lacks charm. It's not the kind of place you want to linger because it just isn't a pleasant environment. The white and blue color scheme reminds me of Nykredit. And all the headlines together create a chaotic impression—it feels a bit like browsing a free classifieds site.*

*F45: Visually, it would be nice if it were more aesthetically pleasing. If it looked more professional—with graphics, for example. You also identify with the look and feel of a media outlet, and Zetland is a good example of that. They've created a brand where people are proud to carry a tote bag with their logo on it. That shows you're proud to support that media outlet.*

*M37: I find both the visual design and the writing style a bit dated.*

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## Learning from *the doers*

Based on the responses provided by the informant group in the qualitative interviews, one theme stands out clearly: the notion of a community feeling recurs consistently. In discussions about what it would take for them to experience such a sense of belonging, the majority point to three key elements: personal journalism, relevant content, and useful knowledge.

For each of these aspects, I have consulted either a media outlet or an expert who has helped deepen my understanding or shared practical insights into the journalistic approaches that the new Svendborg resident is asking for.

# Community–feeling

## FINT

The idea that a media outlet should—or aspires to—build a user-engaged forum is hardly new. In her book *From Tower to Square*, former Constructive Institute fellow Gerd Maria May references several studies in which the same answer recurs when subscribers are asked why they chose to support a particular media outlet: the feeling of belonging—of being part of the media, the community, and the journalism itself—is a decisive factor for media users<sup>6</sup>.

In Gerd Maria May’s journalistic framework FINT, the concept of community plays a central role, as it is precisely what the “F” in the model stands for (fællesskab—community). According to Gerd Maria May, journalism becomes especially valuable only when it leads into a community that the audience finds relevant. In her book, she argues, among other things, that:

“... when a media outlet defines what makes a story good, it should be based on how the story can be used.”

One way to achieve this is by creating stories in collaboration with others—for example, by involving readers and asking them what they want.

How journalism is produced, and how and when the journalist lets go of the story, are both crucial in terms of journalism’s potential to foster community. Gerd Maria May refers here to the model of “involving journalism”, where the journalist shifts from writing about people to writing with them—so that both sources and the target audience become active co-creators of the stories, from the initial idea to research, debate, and follow-up.

The definition of success must shift such that journalism only gains real value when someone actually uses it for something. That is why the period after publication is equally important—because that is when the story must be supported in order to take root and live among those who are meant to benefit from it.

## IF Fremad Nørhalne

Community and a sense of belonging are concepts that closely align with associations and organized civic life—sectors which, like the media, rely on local support and engagement. Both local media outlets and local associations share the goal of strengthening local identity and fostering a sense of community. While associations depend on paying members and

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<sup>6</sup> “Paths to Subscription: Why recent subscribers chose to pay for news”, American Press Institute, 2018. “How We Know Journalism is Good for Democracy”, Josh Stern, 2018.

volunteer efforts, local media rely on subscribers, user-contributed tips, and civic engagement.

For that reason, I find it relevant to briefly shift the focus away from the media landscape and toward the world of associations to examine how these organizations succeed in remaining relevant and present in the lives of local residents.

Each year, DIF (the National Olympic Committee and Sports Confederation of Denmark) selects the Sports Association of the Year. In 2024, the North Jutland-based club IF Fremad Nørhøne was among the nominees. Located in a town of just over 1,500 residents, the club can proudly report more than half the population—precisely 850—as paying members, in addition to hundreds of volunteers.<sup>7</sup>

Since 2022, Marie Haar Vad has served as chair of the association, and according to her, there are two key factors that contribute to making IF Fremad Nørhøne a community people actively want to be part of.

First, the narrative that it is fun to be involved—and that the association is a success—is something they deliberately work to promote and share. For that reason, the association frequently posts about its volunteers on social media, and these posts are consistently shared and circulated by other volunteers.

Second, the association puts significant effort into appreciating and recognizing its volunteers. For instance, every autumn they host an annual party, where the only “ticket” required is having volunteered in the association during the year. The event has become hugely popular and is now widely regarded as the party of the year in the town.

In addition, the volunteers receive a small annual gift, and those who help with the well-known and international Nørhøne Cup are invited to a thank-you brunch afterwards.

Because the level of support from both members and volunteers is so strong, IF Fremad Nørhøne is able to offer children aged 0–10 an annual membership fee of just 375 DKK and 525 DKK for those aged 11–18—allowing them access to all of the club’s activities. But the low fee also serves another purpose: it fosters a culture of reciprocity.

“With such a low price, you don’t really feel like you’ve paid much, so in return, we tell people we’d like their help when we need it,” says Marie Haar Vad.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.dif.dk/om-dif/priser/aarets-idraetsforening/fremad-noerhøne>

Although the association has never lacked volunteers and everything has always worked out in the end, Marie Haar Vad does notice a shift: it is becoming somewhat harder to attract long-term volunteers who are willing to take on recurring tasks such as weekly team coaching. She therefore hopes that their new partnership with DIF will be particularly helpful going forward.

Together with two neighboring clubs, Vestbjerg IF and Biersted IF, IF Fremad Nørhøne now shares a youth coordinator from DIF. This individual's role is to support and develop local youth engagement across the associations and to raise awareness about the clubs and the work they do.<sup>8</sup> For the three associations in Northern Jutland, this will be achieved in part through an elective course on volunteerism for upper primary school students, as well as by offering opportunities for students to complete internships within the associations.

"I hope this will help draw attention to how valuable and important volunteer work is in local communities—because it's the younger generation we need to invest in. They're the ones who will carry the associations forward," says Marie Haar Vad.

## The personal journalist/journalistic

To feel part of a community, several members of the informant group point to the importance of a personal journalist or narrative style. They value a journalist who dares to use themselves and take personal risks—a journalist whose presence is felt through the language, the text, and, on a very practical level, through a clearly expressed personality.

### Camilla Mehlsen

*Media researcher and current fellow at the Centre for Journalism at the University of Southern Denmark. Over the past year, she has been studying news influencers and exploring the question: "How can personality-driven news journalism help us better engage users while also maintaining journalistic quality?"*

According to Camilla Mehlsen, there are three key tools in the toolbox that traditional media can learn from news influencers in order to better engage users:

AUTHENTICITY

TRANSPARENCY

ENGAGING IN DIALOGUE WITH USERS RATHER THAN JUST SPEAKING AT THEM

### Authenticity

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.dif.dk/om-dif/det-arbejder-vi-for/fremtidens-idraet-for-boern-og-unge/spydsidsforeninger>



According to Camilla Mehlsen, authenticity is a key form of currency, as it fosters a sense of presence and relatability. This is especially evident in the podcasting space, where the host's personality is often central. As a listener, one can feel genuinely accompanied when the host shares something personal, appears relatable, and comes across as human. Within this atmosphere of good company, one can learn—even when the content is niche or lengthy. It is precisely the personality that helps users connect with the journalism—and stay engaged.

Camilla Mehlsen believes that maintaining the balance between authenticity and credibility presents a major paradox. It is now widely recognized that trust in journalists tends to score relatively low—and audiences exhibit a similar skepticism toward influencers. However, influencers have a distinct advantage in this regard, and it is something from which journalists and traditional media can learn, Mehlsen argues. She refers to a recent study by American journalist, author, and entrepreneur Julia Angwin. One of the key findings in Angwin's study is that, unlike traditional media, which entered the digital space assuming they could carry their credibility with them, digital creators were not automatically granted trust by users. Instead, these creators have had to work hard to earn and maintain credibility—something they do, and succeed at, by interacting directly with their audiences and by taking them seriously.<sup>9</sup>

In her conclusion, Julia Angwin offers recommendations for how journalists can draw inspiration from digital creators:

“... rethink how we engage with audiences, moving from casual ad-hoc engagement to more structured and thoughtful connections built around the elements of trustworthiness.”

“... journalists could describe their reporting processes more clearly and focus on demonstrating domain expertise. Some newsrooms have started adding more personal biographical details to bolster their reporters' credentials, which is a good start but not nearly enough.”

She also recommends rethinking the concept of objectivity:

“... shedding this notion of personal purity in favor of embracing rigor and expertise could change the way news is presented.”

As an example of this, she highlights Proof News, which includes an “ingredient list” with each article outlining the methods, approaches, and any collaborations with experts that contributed to the reporting. Another example is the news outlet Semafor, which features a “Reporter's View” section in which the journalist can describe their own expertise and

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<sup>9</sup> <https://shorensteincenter.org/future-trustworthy-information-learning-online-content-creators/>

knowledge of the topic, alongside a separate section dedicated entirely to presenting a skeptical perspective.

### **Transparency**

The second tool—transparency—has already become something of a trend among several media outlets. We are seeing, for instance, more public service platforms hiring hosts who incorporate aspects of themselves into the journalism without necessarily expressing a subjective opinion on the subject at hand. Examples include Zetland, TV 2 Echo, and P3, where a journalist on the latter investigated the hormonal IUD and openly shared that she uses the contraceptive herself. Having something personal at stake works—it creates relatability.

On a broader scale, Camilla Mehlsen believes that transparency is both relevant and necessary, especially in light of a troubling development: the growing crisis of trust in the media.

We can no longer assume that media consumers inherently trust the news. Transparency, then, becomes a tool to help rebuild that trust. It requires being open about which topics one chooses to cover—and why those topics are of interest to the journalist. The traditional principle of aspired objectivity can hinder this openness, as it tends to place an artificial distance between the journalist and the audience in terms of sourcing and topic selection. However, as Camilla Mehlsen points out, the key word is aspired. Being transparent about one's editorial choices—both inclusions and omissions—can, in fact, enhance credibility.

### **Speaking with users, not at them**

News influencers typically engage in conversation with their audiences. In doing so, they break the fourth wall that classical news journalism tends to preserve. Among the media outlets that effectively apply this technique, Camilla Mehlsen highlights Weekendavisen, TV 2 Echo, TV 2 Østjylland, and Zetland.

At Zetland, journalists interact with their audience both within and outside of the journalistic content. In their articles, they appear as real individuals—not just as neutral reporters. Outside the journalism itself, they regularly ask for input, feedback, and topic suggestions from their members. In doing so, they foster a sense of community in which readers feel they are part of something meaningful. It was through such outreach, for instance, that Zetland learned many members wanted more energy and focus placed on audio journalism.

Camilla Mehlsen is unequivocal in her view: yes, traditional media can—and should—learn from news influencers. She sees this as a real opportunity to rethink the news format while remaining relevant to the public. Internationally, several media organizations are already looking to influencers for survival strategies, mimicking their trends and modes of engagement.

She also recommends that media invest more in host-led journalism. In today's digital media landscape, the role of the host has transformative potential. When a journalist steps forward as the face of the story, it creates new opportunities for both authenticity and trust-building. This also calls for rethinking tone and delivery. Whereas the traditional host strives to remain as neutral as possible, the modern host should aim to be engaging—like good company at a dinner party—communicating with an almost entertaining quality.

In general, we should consider how journalism can become more personalized or embodied. Regardless of the format—print, audio, or social media—there is room to amplify authenticity. Using the first person in journalism is by no means new, but today's media formats offer new ways to build community and deliver value through a more relational, human-centered approach.

In particular, Camilla Mehlsen sees enormous potential in transparency for local media. Journalists can openly share their own curiosity and uncertainty—the very questions that led them to pursue a story—and allow that sense of inquiry to be visible in the final product. Many traditional media outlets now have a presence on social media, and this format is especially well-suited to transparency. Behind-the-scenes content and outtakes work particularly well in these channels, where the emphasis can shift from finished product to journalistic process.

## Zetland

At Zetland, the personal brand of each journalist is expected to play a more prominent role going forward, according to Editor-in-Chief Lea Korsgaard in an article published by *Journalisten* in March 2025.<sup>10</sup> This shift is a response to—and a regulation of—the evolving media reality, which Zetland continuously assesses, even if it means that their strategy takes on new forms from time to time and shifts in focus. It is part of their entrepreneurial DNA to remain adaptable. In the article, Lea Korsgaard explains that the era of users sharing links to articles via Facebook is over, and that audiences are increasingly moving away from media institutions and toward individual personalities. As a result, content on Zetland must be moving forward and “... either be carried by the journalist's personal brand, elevated into a major narrative series, or become part of a recurring and recognizable format.”

One example of this is journalist Nanna Schelde's personal essay from 2023.<sup>11</sup> In the article, she candidly shared her concerns and reflections about what introducing a mobile phone into her nine-year-old daughter's life might mean for her childhood. The outcry gained so

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<sup>10</sup> [https://journalisten.dk/features/med-bulldozerenergi-har-lea-korsgaard-drevet-zetland-til-tops-men-nu-famler-hun-efter-en-ny-rolle/?fbclid=IwY2xjawJXljRleHRuA2FlbQlxMQABHRD2AWbt5gDkOILWfjs-4LUOaDFP27DxpsjEOSvpPUEGsWdpZt89p\\_XKWw\\_aem\\_vjpiOxMatZuLY\\_KzE4yWLg](https://journalisten.dk/features/med-bulldozerenergi-har-lea-korsgaard-drevet-zetland-til-tops-men-nu-famler-hun-efter-en-ny-rolle/?fbclid=IwY2xjawJXljRleHRuA2FlbQlxMQABHRD2AWbt5gDkOILWfjs-4LUOaDFP27DxpsjEOSvpPUEGsWdpZt89p_XKWw_aem_vjpiOxMatZuLY_KzE4yWLg)

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.zetland.dk/historie/soB3ZgR4-ae6Ewl5D-f5faf>

much attention that it developed into an extended article series titled “Sluk, mens legen er god” (“Switch Off While Play Is Still Good”).

Nanna Schelde’s personal story became the driving force behind the series. In the first article, a personal essay, she writes:

“So in the coming months, you’ll meet me here as both a mother and a journalist on a mission, and we’ll begin with my personal outcry. And I need your help and support, because I’m under time pressure. The deal is that my daughter gets a phone this summer, when she starts after-school club. Before that fateful summer day, I want to explore how serious the issue really is. I’ll be searching for help, answers, solutions, and experiences that will help me understand just how worried I should—or shouldn’t—be.”<sup>12</sup>

Throughout the article, Schelde references various studies, interwoven with her personal reflections, anxieties, and anecdotes from family life.

“I have to admit, I’m nervous about what you out there will think. It’s totally fine if you find me sanctimonious, old-fashioned, and incredibly annoying. I’m fully aware that I’ve willingly placed myself in a minefield...”

“A couple of months ago, we had to compromise with our daughter. Every school day was starting with her classmates talking—and arguing—about what had been written in the class group chat the night before. Naturally, she couldn’t join the conversation. Now she has an email address, so she can at least follow along in the shared thread. A class chat.”

She ends the article with the following direct appeal to her readers:

“And I’ll need all the help I can get. Over the next few months, I’ll be traveling in search of knowledge, solutions, answers, and inspiring examples. And you, dear members, readers, and listeners, have a crucial role to play. So—who’s with me? Who has insights or knows someone I should talk to? Write to me at [nanna@zetland.dk](mailto:nanna@zetland.dk) and please also fill out this survey. Let’s find the answers together.”

This type of direct engagement with the journalist behind the article is not entirely new—but the pace of its development is accelerating, notes Camilla Mehlsen in an article in *Journalisten*.<sup>13</sup> Most recently, Editor-in-Chief at Det Nordjyske Mediehus, Kevin Walsh, announced that their new strategy will move in a direction more akin to Zetland—where journalists bring more of themselves into the reporting. Going forward, their journalism will

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.zetland.dk/historie/soB3ZgR4-ae6EwI5D-f5faf>

<sup>13</sup> <https://journalisten.dk/er-jeg-havnet-i-en-shitstorm-da-nanna-brugte-sig-selv-i-en-historie-gik-telefonen-amok/>

also become more personal and host-driven, with the journalist no longer hidden behind a byline.

“You should be able to feel that the people writing are North Jutlanders—people who live in the region and understand everyday life here,” said Kevin Walsh in an interview with *Journalisten*<sup>14</sup>.

As a consequence of the explosion in the battle for attention, we are now increasingly following individuals rather than media outlets or institutions. In this way, personality has become an increasingly valuable currency for the media, explains Camilla Mehlsen in the same *Journalisten* article.

## Further research

This is supported by the report “Next Gen News: Understanding the Audiences of 2030,” published by the Financial Times in collaboration with the research group Knight Lab.<sup>15</sup> In the report, young people’s relationship with the news is described as “complicated,” as they are both aware of the importance of staying informed and simultaneously frustrated by the way news is communicated by traditional media. As a result, most of them get their news from content creators.

Young audiences are calling for a stronger sense of connection with the sender in traditional media, and they need to understand why a story matters. In this context, the journalist’s personal motivation and voice can play a significant role.

In the research article “Can Journalists be Influencers?”, producer and expert in social media storytelling Salla-Rose Leinonen explores what journalism and journalists can learn from influencers—and how those insights might be applied in the newsroom.<sup>16</sup>

The study concludes that many of the expectations placed on journalists and creators are, in fact, quite similar: authenticity, transparency, genuine engagement, and a promise of quality content. For this reason, it is worth examining more closely how influencers specifically work to meet these audience demands.

The study includes a list of 14 points outlining what followers expect from influencers, followed by 14 corresponding actions that describe how influencers address those expectations. Among the audience expectations are statements such as “Feels authentic,” “Is interactive, engaging and present,” and “Shares how they get their information.” In contrast,

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<sup>14</sup> <https://journalisten.dk/nordjyske-vil-vaere-mere-som-zetland-journalister-skal-bruge-sig-selv/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.next-gen-news.com/downloadreport.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> [https://blogsmedia.lse.ac.uk/blogs.dir/19/files/2022/06/22\\_0295-POLIS-Report-Journo-Influencers-V4.pdf](https://blogsmedia.lse.ac.uk/blogs.dir/19/files/2022/06/22_0295-POLIS-Report-Journo-Influencers-V4.pdf)

the influencer strategies include: “Creating a connection through interaction with followers to seem more real,” “Choosing topics that are relatable and trying to act relatable,” and “Deciding what personal information is shared publicly to create a sense of authenticity and realness.”

With regard to how authenticity can be built, the study suggests that journalists can learn from influencers. Rather than concealing editorial decisions and production processes behind the final published product, journalists should instead adopt an influencer-type of ownership. This includes, for example, highlighting the following transparency-based trust indicators—and making the answers visible within the journalistic product:

**IS IT CLEAR WHO PRODUCED THIS?**

**WHAT IS IT?**

**WHY WAS IT MADE?**

**WHERE DOES THE INFORMATION COME FROM?**

**WAS IT SOURCED ETHICALLY AND WITH DIVERSITY IN MIND?**

**CAN I INTERACT AND PROVIDE FEEDBACK?**

Moreover, the study highlights an important point: in an already saturated media environment with a vast array of content, it can be particularly difficult for traditional news outlets to break through, differentiate themselves, build credibility, and develop a loyal audience. As a potential solution, the study identifies a growing trend: journo-influencers—professional journalists who also use social media platforms to reach and engage with their audiences.

These journalists often gain popularity through a combination of personal presence, tone of voice, content format, storytelling style, and clear expertise. Journo-influencers build trust—and by extension, a following—through consistent interaction with their audience, actively listening to them, and addressing their wants and needs. Their content is recognizable and relatable, and they communicate in a familiar, conversational style.

## User Involvement

In the qualitative interviews with the informant group, it became clear that the participants do not perceive Fyns Amts Avis as relevant or timely for them—partly because the local media outlet does not engage with them or cover the topics they care about. One way a local media outlet can ensure greater relevance and resonance is through user involvement. Several Danish media outlets have extensive experience in practicing this approach.

## Zetland

At Zetland, user involvement forms a core part of the outlet's identity. Zetland consistently communicates—through various formats and channels—that its users are essential to the media's existence. One example of this is the way Zetland refers to its subscribers as **members**, which directly influences how the organization approaches both its journalism and its broader media strategy.

“In the old days, journalists guarded their stories closely until the day of publication, often gripped by a kind of misguided paranoia that led them to suspect everyone of trying to steal their work. That practice is peculiar,” writes Editor-in-Chief Lea Korsgaard in an article on Zetland, in which she explains why Zetland refers to its audience as members—not customers.<sup>17</sup>

At Zetland, it is considered as a strength when journalists share their challenges and reflections during the development of a story—precisely so they can receive help from members along the way. Members are thus involved in idea development, contribute input during the process, and participate in online discussions after publication, where they often offer new perspectives that may lead to future stories.

In addition to contributing to the journalism itself, members also help shape Zetland as a media platform by submitting ideas and requests for new features and improvements.

“When we started recording audio versions of all our stories and built an app designed to give equal weight to the listening and reading experience, it was because our members asked us to,” explains Korsgaard in the same article.

As a membership-based media outlet, transparency is essential to Zetland. Equally important is the support of its members, which is why they are granted insight into everything from editorial mistakes to financials and strategic decisions behind the scenes at Zetland<sup>18</sup>. An example of this is the pop-up series “Zetland about Zetland,” in which the outlet brings its members inside the newsroom and offers insight into how its journalism, technology, and business are developed. In one article, for instance, Korsgaard recounts how her own son one morning turned off Zetland's morning news podcast, Helicopter, and prompted her to reflect on how to communicate difficult or sad news in a way that doesn't cause listeners to tune out.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.zetland.dk/historie/s8DP4EKV-mTrivnAs-72a1c>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.zetland.dk/historie/s8DP4EKV-mTrivnAs-72a1c>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.zetland.dk/historie/sJtYjLT-a8DEYXaM-8b82c>

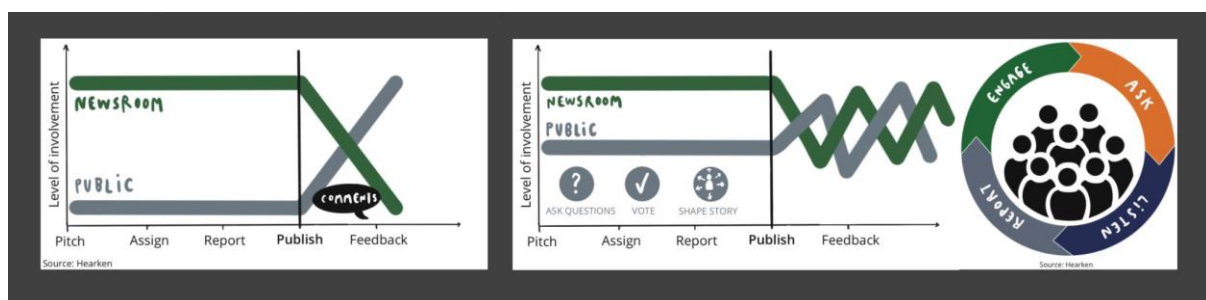
Moreover, it is important to Zetland that they do not reduce their members to a template-based target audience. For this reason, in-person encounters—such as lectures, events, and live shows—are also given high priority.

“Journalism is not made for a customer base. It is made for a group of citizens—for real people who cannot be reduced to cardboard cutouts. Only when a journalist is aware of that does journalism truly become relevant,” explains Korsgaard.<sup>20</sup>

## Kosmopol, tvSyd and Der Nordschleswiger

In 2022–2023, TV 2 Kosmopol journalist Nanna Holst was a fellow at the Constructive Institute. During her fellowship, she investigated how regional media outlets can build greater trust, foster community, and increase relevance through user involvement. Based on her research, she developed a method designed to explain and support how traditional media can improve their ability to listen to their audience—thereby enhancing credibility, community, and relevance.

The practical tool that emerged was the format “Ask Us”, which is based on the principle that the newsroom adopts a listening mindset before initiating its journalistic work, and that users are integrated into the process before, during, and after publication, as illustrated in the model below.

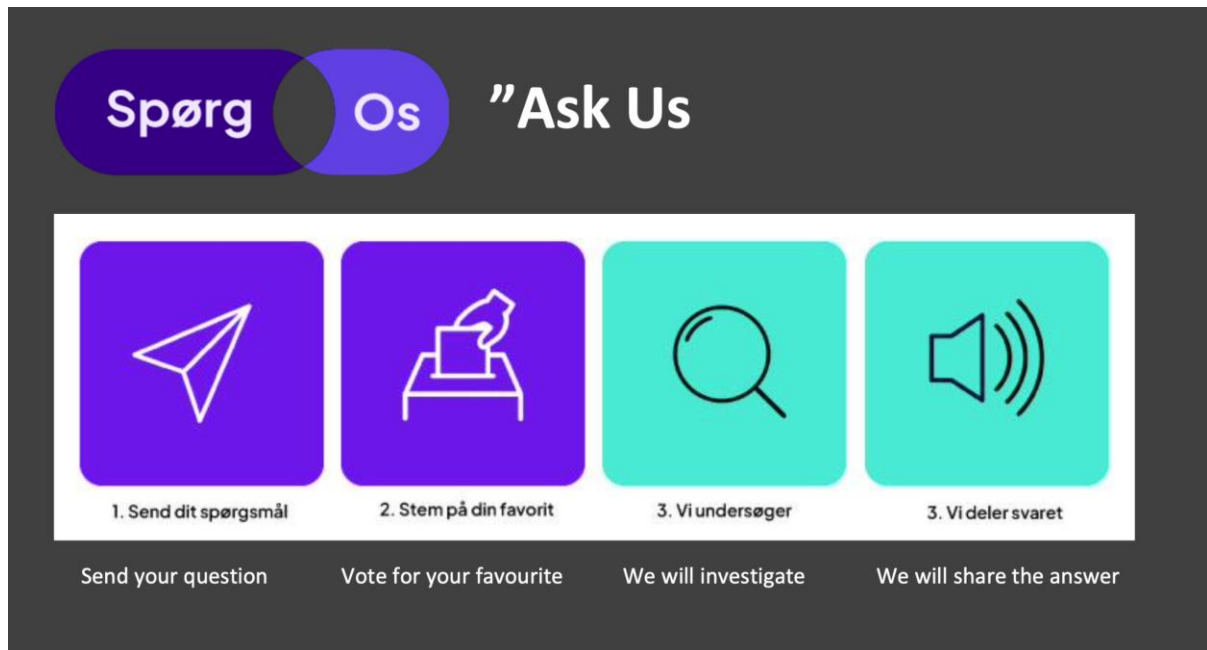


“WHEN YOU START WITH THE PUBLIC INSTEAD OF ENDING WITH IT PEOPLE START TO SUBSCRIBE, PAY AND STAY”. THESE ARE THE WORDS OF JENNIFER BRANDEL, CEO AND CO-FOUNDER OF THE GLOBAL PUBLIC-FIRST MEDIA COMPANY HEARKEN. IT IS PRECISELY THIS PHILOSOPHY THAT KOSMOPOL’S “ASK US” FORMAT IS BUILT UPON: WHERE THE USER EARLIER WAS SEEN AS A CONSUMER, WE MUST NOW VIEW THEM AS A PARTNER—SOMEONE WE CREATE VALUE FOR, AND WHO IS INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS. AS A MEDIA OUTLET, WE SHOULD THEREFORE BE ASKING, AS BRANDEL PUTS IT: “WHAT CAN WE HELP THE PUBLIC UNDERSTAND OR DO?” PEOPLE SHOULD SEE THE MEDIA AS A PLACE WHERE THEY CAN TURN FOR HELP AND FIND ANSWERS.

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.zetland.dk/historie/s8DP4EKV-mTrivnAs-72a1c>

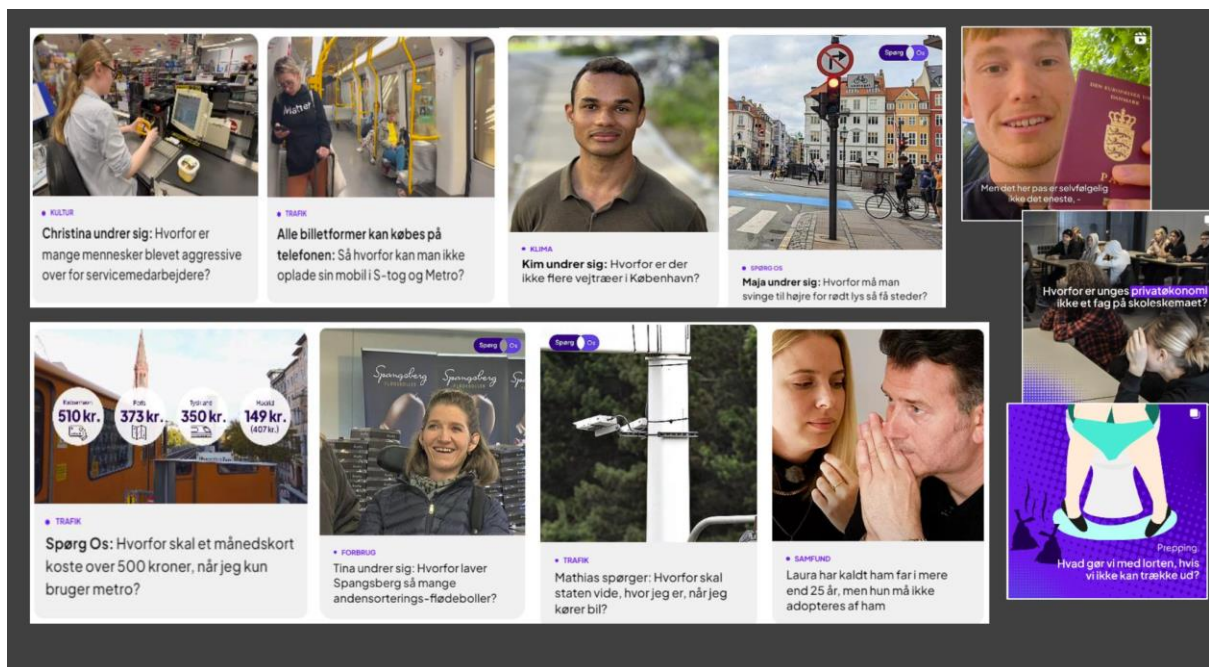


The process is as follows: In “Ask Us,” readers submit a question, which is then put to a vote—and the winning question becomes the subject of a journalistic investigation by TV 2 Kosmopol.



IN THE “ASK US” FORMAT, JOURNALISTS ARE EXPECTED TO VIEW CITIZENS AS CO-CREATORS. THE REPORTERS ALWAYS GO OUT AND MEET THE INDIVIDUALS WHO SUBMITTED THE SELECTED QUESTION, WHICH ALSO SIGNALS THAT THE MEDIA TAKES USER INQUIRIES SERIOUSLY.

Since the summer of 2021, TV 2 Kosmopol has received 11,600 questions—many of them submitted by young people. Of those participants, 49 percent subsequently agreed to subscribe to Kosmopol’s newsletter.



“Ask Us” is now also being used by the regional TV station tvSyd, which since April 1, 2025, has been reaching out to citizens in its broadcast region to collect their questions and areas of curiosity. The concept closely mirrors that of Kosmopol: every Tuesday, three questions are selected and put to a vote. The winning question is then investigated by journalists, and the answer is shared through articles and/or television segments.

The screenshot shows the 'Spørg os' voting interface with the following content:

**Spørg os**  
Stem på ugens spørgsmål

Stem her: Hvilket spørgsmål skal vi undersøge næste gang?

- ☐ **Gitte Jakobsen**  
9.4.2025  
Hvor mange beskyttelsesrum er der tilbage i Sønderjylland?
- ☐ **Jørgen Mørk-Jensen**  
9.4.2025  
Hvorfor kremerer man ikke de afdøde inden den kirkelige handling, da mange kirkeindgange er for smalle til at bære kisten igennem?
- ☐ **Tove Karlsen**  
9.4.2025  
Hvorfor kører alt for mange børn og voksne på løbehjul eller cykel uden lys, når det er mørkt?

**Indsend**

Since tvSyd has only been running the format for just under a month, the experience is still limited—but the initial results are promising, says Editor-in-Chief Jesper Nygaard. Within a month, they received 125 questions from 100 different users, averaging about 25 per week. In terms of voting, there is still room for growth, with 450 being the highest number of votes cast so far. However, the articles produced in response to the selected questions have performed well in terms of readership, he concludes.

Some of the submitted questions include:

- Did you know? Chip bags must be sorted differently—and there's a cost if you get it wrong<sup>21</sup>
- Jan wonders: Why don't we put solar panels on rooftops instead of making an entire village unsellable?<sup>22</sup>

The format was implemented at tvSyd as part of a broader strategy development process, in which it was decided from the beginning that users—their needs and voices—should be a central part of both the process and the final product. As part of this initiative, Lene Heiselberg, a researcher at the University of Southern Denmark, was brought on board, and several studies were launched. One of these was a qualitative study in which all tvSyd employees, including management, visited 50 users in tvSyd's area to better understand them and therefore asked a wide range of questions: everything from their everyday interests and media habits to how they use tvSyd and what kind of content they would like from the regional broadcaster.

“It became especially clear that people need help understanding what a piece of news actually means for them. It has to provide value and be communicated in a way that explains why they should read or watch it,” says Jesper Nygaard.

Inspired by tvSyd and their user involvement initiative, the German newspaper Der Nordschleswiger is now launching a similar project. As part of this effort, three editorial staff members will each interview ten individuals selected on a range of criteria.

The purpose of the interviews is also to gain insight into the group of people the newspaper currently struggles to reach, explains Editor-in-Chief Cornelius von Tiedemann:

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<sup>21</sup> <https://www.tvsyd.dk/spoerg-os/vidste-du-det-chipsposser-skal-sorteres-forskelligt-og-det-koster-hvis-du-sorterer-forkert>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.tvsyd.dk/spoerg-os/jan-undrer-sig-hvorfor-laegger-vi-ikke-solceller-pa-tagene-i-stedet-for-at-gore-en-hel-landsby-usaelgelig>

“We want to learn what they’re interested in and would like to read about—but without asking them directly. The questions might be something like: What’s your favorite song? What do you think about work? It’s meant to be a conversation, so we can get to know one another.”

The project will ultimately lead to the creation of a feedback group that the minority newspaper can draw on for idea development.

“Once we’ve collected a batch of ideas, we can reach out to them—either via Teams or email—and ask what they think of these 10 ideas. I’ve heard from other media outlets that have used this method that it gives them far more story ideas and new sources.”

## A Local Hub

Several informants expressed in the qualitative interviews a desire for the local media outlet to cultivate community, act as a unifying—rather than divisive—force, and serve as the glue of the local society.

*M45: I hope you’ll dare to tell the smaller stories too—those that help foster a sense of pride. That you see it as your mission to improve the community.*

Both NRK Buskerud and Rødovre Lokal Nyt have experimented with serving as local gathering points.

## NRK Buskerud

*Interview with Benedikte Fjelly, news editor at NRK Buskerud in Drammen. Buskerud is one of the 13 regional offices operated by NRK in Norway. The newsroom covers an area with 227,000 residents across 18 municipalities, and it produces television, radio, and written content for NRK’s main platforms.*

In 2024, Buskerud was reestablished as an independent county after having been merged with Akershus and Østfold into the county of Viken since 2020. In the wake of this regained independence, the idea for “We Love Buskerud” was born”<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.nrk.no/buskerud/hjerte-for-buskerud-1.16685058>

“One of our colleagues pointed out that we needed to figure out what identity means to the people of Buskerud. What’s special about us? What ties us together? What do we actually have in Buskerud—do we even share a common identity? Because Buskerud was very divided, and there were major differences between the cities and the mountain regions—so there was a real problem. That’s why the goal was to make everyone proud to live in Buskerud and proud to be part of the community,” says Benedikte Fjelly.

The project culminated in a radio marathon—a full-day broadcast dedicated to celebrating Buskerud as a county. Throughout the day, there were segments from all 18 municipalities, as a team of journalists traveled to each location to ask selected interviewees the following question:

**WHAT ARE YOU PROUD OF ABOUT LIVING HERE?**

**WHY DO YOU WANT TO LIVE HERE?**

**WHAT DO YOU FEEL CONNECTS THE PEOPLE OF BUSKERUD?**

Articles were also produced about the 18 municipalities and their respective cases. A common theme among the responses was that people cited nature and the local community as the main reasons why they were happy to live where they did in Buskerud.

During the radio broadcast, NRK Buskerud also announced the winner of “The Biggest Heart in Buskerud”. In the weeks leading up to the marathon, NRK invited nominations of local individuals known for their selflessness—those who contributed positively to their communities. An article featuring all nominees was published, and a jury selected the winner, who was revealed during the live broadcast and joined the team in the studio. The prize was a portrait created by a young, up-and-coming artist from the region.

Benedikte Fjelly reflects on the experience of producing the marathon broadcast:

“The award ceremony was definitely the highlight of the day. Overall, there was an incredibly positive response from listeners and citizens to the series. Internally, it was also a really valuable experience for the newsroom. For once, everyone had to work toward the same goal, and we all wanted to succeed—together. It was constructive for us as a team, and it was a really good experience. Just as important as the 12-hour broadcast itself was the way it created cohesion within the newsroom. It became a unifying and almost team-building experience for the editorial staff as well.”

## Rødovre Lokal Nyt

*Interview with André Bentsen about his time as editor-in-chief at Rødovre Lokal Nyt. He is currently news editor at MigogKbh.*

During his time as editor-in-chief of Rødovre Lokal Nyt, André Bentsen made a point of moving away from the traditional gatekeeper role and instead embracing the role of a gatewatcher.

One example of this was the concept “Mission of the Month”, in which readers would write, call, or email the newsroom with a challenge or problem they could not solve themselves—and the editorial team would then attempt to find a solution. For instance, the issue of a shortage of apprenticeships for young tradespeople in Rødovre was addressed by the newspaper through a matchmaking initiative between students and local businesses.

To sustain the format, the local newspaper regularly held meetings with representatives from local stakeholder groups—such as community leaders, association heads, business alliances, cultural networks, and municipal committee chairs—and asked: What is your biggest challenge right now?

If the editorial team identified a challenge with the potential for a journalistic approach and a solution-oriented outcome, it would be selected as that month’s mission.

André Bentsen has had consistently positive experiences with engaging people from the local community. One key advantage is that it creates a wider base of individuals who feel invested in the product—and who are therefore also more likely to share and distribute it. On several occasions, the newspaper collaborated with a local high school class. The students were first trained in the principles of quality journalism, then sent out on reporting assignments, and finally had their work published at Rødovre Lokal Nyt. One such project involved the students visiting a nursing home to co-create stories on loneliness with the residents.

Bentsen also recommends producing journalism from unconventional and immersive locations to add vibrancy and relevance:

“It’s fun to report from a bed in a nursing home, from a child’s chair in a kindergarten classroom, or from the substitutes’ bench at a football match. It creates a kind of dynamic you can tap into. Climb down from the tower and go out into the community—be part of it and the local networks. There’s no need to invent communities when they already exist,” he explains.

## Academic Input

### Lifestyle Markers and Political Behavior

*Master’s degree in Political Science, 10 ECTS credits*

In the master's course "Lifestyle Markers and Political Behavior," we were introduced to how politicians' private lives now play an increasingly significant role in their public communication. In particular, the way political leaders present their personal lives—including everything from what they eat for lunch, morning runs, theatre outings, football matches, and knitting—has become a key component of modern politics.

There has been a growing privatization and personalization of political life, and the course examined how politicians' image, lifestyle, and symbolic self-presentation influence the relationship between politicians and voters. For example, how do voters respond to this trend? And can certain social groups be targeted by displaying a particular image? These are just some of the questions the course explored.

A similar development can be observed in the field of journalism, where the concept of the journo-influencer has emerged and gained notable traction. As mentioned earlier, their popularity is partly due to the way they showcase their personality, cover relatable topics, and communicate in a familiar, accessible tone. In doing so, they build trust—and often a loyal following<sup>24</sup>.

In addition, the course has also provided general knowledge and insight into how politicians have begun to act and use social media – including their typical goals and purposes. This knowledge is highly useful in relation to the upcoming local elections in Denmark in the autumn of 2025.

## Critical Social Psychology

*Masters' degree in psychology, 15 ECTS*

In the master's course "Critical Social Psychology," the aim was to gain an overview of canonical critical social theories, both in their classical and contemporary forms. The course was grounded in fundamental questions about the good life and the good society and addressed themes such as identity politics, inequality, consumerism, ideology and power, existence, and freedom. While drawing on insights from sociology and philosophy, the course maintained a particular focus on the role of the psychologist in relation to critical theory.

Within the field of journalism, the perspective provided by critical social theory can be incredibly useful and may serve as an underlying premise for one's journalistic work.

By applying a critical societal lens, one zooms out to show that individual problems rarely exist in isolation. This perspective elevates the analysis by linking structural conditions to

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<sup>24</sup> [https://blogsmedia.lse.ac.uk/blogs.dir/19/files/2022/06/22\\_0295-POLIS-Report-Journo-Influencers-V4.pdf](https://blogsmedia.lse.ac.uk/blogs.dir/19/files/2022/06/22_0295-POLIS-Report-Journo-Influencers-V4.pdf)

the individual cases presented in a news story. For example, in reporting on stress, a journalist might not only describe a source's personal experience but also explore the broader work systems that contribute to widespread stress—examining how economic conditions, leadership culture, and legislation affect people's mental health. In contrast, mainstream psychology would typically frame the issue as the individual's own problem and offer tools for self-management.

A critical societal perspective seeks to include the broader society and examine whether there are conditions that might help solve the problem.

One can thus argue that a critical social (psychology) lens contributes a constructive dimension to journalism by providing a more nuanced and solution-oriented lens—one that investigates and exposes who holds power in a given situation, which systems maintain the problem, who is resisting them, and whether alternative solutions exist elsewhere.

## How Fyns Amts Avis Can Become The Best Friend of The Newcomer to Svendborg

Several Danish local media outlets have begun rethinking their role and approach to journalism in order to better accommodate changing media habits, new audiences, and a highly competitive attention economy. Experiences from outlets such as Midtjyllands Avis, SkanderborgLIV, and Det Nordjyske Mediehus indicate that targeted, personal, and constructive journalism has the potential to enhance relevance, engagement, and reader loyalty—both among new and existing audiences. A clear understanding of the target group, transparency, and an editorial willingness to involve journalists personally in the reporting are highlighted as key strategies.

Midtjyllands Avis has experienced increased reading time, higher engagement, and greater recognition of the journalists behind the stories through the systematic and deliberate implementation of constructive journalism. A key insight is that a constructive approach does not necessarily require large-scale projects but can be integrated into daily reporting using simple tools and principles such as KLIO.

SkanderborgLIV has succeeded in building targeted content—such as their focus area “Childhood”—and by making their journalists more visible. Their experience shows that for readers, quality and relevance matter more than volume.

At Det Nordjyske Mediehus, a clearly defined target audience for the editorial team behind Nordjydernes Liv has created both clarity and impact. Through a constructive lens, a focus on lifestyle, relationships, and family life, and by encouraging journalists to break from strict



objectivity and share more of themselves, they have achieved relevance and reader loyalty—even among those who typically avoid the news.

Bornholms Tidende demonstrates that user involvement and attentiveness to readers' wishes can lead to tangible editorial changes—such as the creation of new reporting positions focused on nature and business. The length of an article is not what matters most; it is the quality—and good journalism can be both slow and thorough.

Although KunMedierne has not yet specifically tailored its journalism to newcomers, its constructive and hyperlocal approach clearly holds potential in that context. With a focus on telling more positive stories and a desire to strengthen connections to the local community, these media outlets can help make Thy and Mors more attractive places for new residents.

Based on the qualitative study of 11 newcomers, it can be concluded that the “new Svendborg resident” exhibits selective and relatively limited media consumption. Most use only one or two media outlets daily, and social media platforms serve as news sources on par with traditional ones. Zetland is the most popular subscription-based outlet and enjoys strong loyalty, while other subscriptions tend to be temporary. Media consumption is concentrated around weekday mornings and commutes, with a preference for short audio formats offering news overviews. On weekends, news is deprioritized in favor of family life. Time is a scarce resource, and news must therefore be meaningful to this group—providing inspiration, depth, and context rather than superficial or conflict-driven updates. Many actively try to avoid media that employ doomsday rhetoric, and excessive exposure to such journalism has caused some to disengage from news entirely for a period.

The informants want a local media outlet that does more than inform—they want one that engages and fosters community. All agree that a local news outlet is necessary, and many feel a sense of obligation to support it—but they also expect more than conventional local journalism. They seek content that is intimate, human-centered, and inspiring. Zetland is highlighted as a media outlet that instills pride and fosters a sense of community. The personal tone and presence of its journalists are seen as strengths that enhance credibility and reader connection.

Content must be useful, explanatory, and locally rooted. It should explore themes such as local development, community initiatives, and provide guidance and inspiration to help users get to know the area. Many, being new to the region, are unfamiliar with local places and key figures—they want to be guided.

Local business journalism is of particular interest, especially stories about entrepreneurs and passionate small businesses. Here, depth is valued over surface-level reporting: Who is driving development? Who is contributing to the community? For those with children, family

life is a central concern. They want journalism that questions and explores topics such as children's culture: Are sports club ambitions too intense? How can we reduce children's screen time? Human-interest stories are broadly in demand, and the podcast Svendborgs Stemmer is mentioned as a model, as it gives voice to local residents and brings the life of the city closer. Culture and nature are also important—not just as events, but as meaningful subjects worth reading about. Who propels the cultural scene? How does it build community? Overall, the informants want a media outlet that is as curious and engaged as they are—where one is not merely a reader but a member, and part of something bigger.

Only one person in the informant group was aware of Fyns Amts Avis' podcast Status fra Sy'Fyn, but audio formats are generally viewed positively—especially when locally anchored and offering perspectives not found elsewhere. Desired content ranges from brief news updates to longer narrative formats but both forms must be rooted in the South Funen region.

There is also interest in Fyns Amts Avis playing a physical role in the community through events and networking. Users are not asking for debate for debate's sake—they seek solutions and community. Many are willing to pay for journalism—particularly if it feels like a meaningful cause. A modern, aesthetic, and multimodal design supports this perception, whereas a cluttered and outdated layout—which many currently associate with Fyns Amts Avis—can be off-putting. It's about being able to see oneself reflected in the media outlet—through its content, appearance, and values.

The qualitative interviews clearly show that newcomers especially seek a sense of community in local journalism. According to the informants, this feeling is created through personal journalism, relevant and practical knowledge—and a sense of belonging. Both research and inspiration from civic life and other media suggest that engagement and community emerge when users are involved and feel they have a voice. Journalist and author Gerd Maria May argues that journalism only gains value when it is used—thus, journalists must invite readers to co-create stories. The example of IF Fremad Nørhøne also demonstrates that a strong narrative of community and visible recognition of local involvement fosters a sense of belonging and participation. The same applies to journalism: when users feel they are part of the media and that they are seen and heard, the relationship is strengthened. The combination of journalistic inclusion and community-building communication may be the key to meeting the expectations expressed by Svendborg's new residents.

Media researcher Camilla Mehlsen highlights three central tools used by news influencers that traditional media can draw inspiration from: authenticity, transparency, and user involvement. Authenticity functions as a key currency that fosters presence and relatability. Transparency helps counteract the growing crisis of trust in journalism by making editorial

choices, motivations, and methods visible. Lastly, the ability to speak with—rather than at—users make a significant difference: community-driven journalism and active audience participation enhance both relevance and engagement. These practices invite a rethinking of the journalist’s role and point toward a more host-driven and relational model of news communication.

As user media habits shift, attention is moving away from institutions and toward individuals. Zetland has responded strategically by placing the journalist’s personal brand at the center of its communication. The personal perspective is intended to create presence, recognition, and engagement—and reinforces the journalist’s dual role as communicator and fellow human being. This development reflects a broader trend in which authenticity and host-driven journalism are increasingly seen as essential in the competition for public attention. In this context, personality has become a central currency in the modern media landscape.

User involvement can be a key to making local media outlets like Fyns Amts Avis more relevant to members of the community who otherwise feel overlooked or unrepresented. Experiences from Zetland show how a membership-based approach can strengthen both community and journalistic quality by actively involving users throughout the process—from idea generation to debate and feedback. TV 2 Kosmopol and tvSyd’s “Ask Us” format offers a method in which media outlets listen to citizens and produce journalism based on their questions. This fosters ownership, engagement, and increased trust. Ultimately, user involvement requires a shift from seeing the user as a passive recipient to recognizing them as a co-creating partner—with all the openness, dialogue, and collaboration that entails.

Several informants expressed a desire for the local newspaper to contribute to the community and foster pride in the local area. Experiences from both NRK in Buskerud and Rødovre Lokal Nyt demonstrate that media outlets can actively serve as gathering points by involving citizens and participating in local stories and challenges. By moving journalism out of the newsroom and closer to everyday life, both relevance and ownership are strengthened. This not only reinforces the connection between the media and its audience but also builds internal cohesion within the newsroom. Local journalism has the potential to unite—when it dares to engage, as shown by the examples from these two local media organizations.

## Recommendations

In short, newcomers are eager to support local journalism and their local media outlet—but only if they can see themselves reflected in it. Fyns Amts Avis must **therefore shift its role from a traditional news provider to a creator of community**. Below is a list of

recommendations—not intended to be exhaustive, but rather an attempt to translate the conclusion into a set of action-oriented suggestions.

#### 1. **A Clear Journalistic and Media Profile**

**Problem:** Many perceive Fyns Amts Avis as outdated and assume the newsroom merely pushes out quick, superficial news.

**Recommendations:**

- Clearly define who we are and what we stand for—what do subscribers get from Fyns Amts Avis? People want to know what they’re buying into. Then communicate this message widely. Make a manifest!

#### 2. **Appoint a User Engagement Coordinator**

User involvement requires both attention and consistency. Experiences from other newsrooms show the importance of assigning this responsibility to one specific person—otherwise, it tends to be neglected.

#### 3. **Know and Speak to the New Svendborg Resident**

**Recommendations:**

- Develop detailed personas (e.g., a young family, a culture enthusiast, a couple of entrepreneurs) and use them as editorial reference points.
- Create a dedicated content section on the website for newcomers, collecting relevant articles in one place. This helps guide them and signals that the newsroom has a clear focus on their needs.

#### 4. **Leverage the Potential of Audio Formats**

**Problem:** Audio formats are a priority for newcomers in their daily routines, but Fyns Amts Avis’ podcast remains largely unknown.

**Recommendations:**

- Relaunch the podcast with stronger marketing, including physical promotion. Meet listeners where they are and introduce the product directly.
- Feature newcomers as guests—this builds connection and provides inspiration.
- Let journalists narrate their own articles and adopt a more personal tone in the audio format overall.

#### 5. **Make the Journalist More Visible**

**Problem:** Newcomers miss authenticity, humanity, and presence in local

journalism.

**Recommendations:**

- Foster a personal journalism style, where reporters use their own voice and bring readers behind the scenes—e.g., through columns, series, or “the story behind the story” features (“Why I covered the case on...”).

6. **Turn Users into Co-Creators**

**Problem:** Newcomers want to feel engaged and heard—not just informed.

**Recommendations:**

- Invite newcomers to contribute content themselves, such as “Newcomer Columns,” “Letters Home to Nørrebro,” or “My First Month in Svendborg.”
- Be active in articles, on social media, and in comment sections—ask readers for ideas, perspectives, or things they’re curious about.

7. **Prioritize Meaningful, Local, and Slow Journalism**

**Problem:** Users are turning away from quick, conflict-driven news in favor of content with depth and practical value.

**Recommendations:**

- Reduce the focus on rapid headlines and short updates; increase the use of explanatory, curious formats.
- Develop thematic coverage on topics newcomers care about—such as children and screen use, work–life balance, or Svendborg’s cultural scene.

8. **Become a Physical and Social Actor in the City**

**Problem:** Newcomers want a local media outlet that fosters a sense of community.

**Recommendations:**

- Host events—possibly in collaboration with local stakeholders, institutions, and individuals—such as community dinners, gardening workshops, DIY events, nature walks for families, or a newcomer welcome day. Use the talents available in the newsroom: if a journalist is skilled in a particular craft, involve them and help the public get to know the people behind the media outlet.
- Collaborate with high school and primary school classes—teach journalism and publish student work.
- Get out into the community and report from settings such as nursing homes, classrooms, and the local town hall cafeteria. Strengthening awareness of *Fyns Amts Avis*, its staff, and its interest in the local population is vital to building a sense of community.

## 9. Update the Visual Identity of the Media Outlet

**Problem:** An outdated design discourages newcomers. Visual identity matters when it comes to feeling aligned with the media one supports.

### Recommendations:

- Give the digital design a contemporary overhaul.

In addition, the table below compiles insights from media outlets, experts, and the community organization involved in this project, and translates them into recommendations that can be used—either directly or as inspiration—by Fyns Amts Avis and other local media.



# Midtjyllands Avis

- **Work thematically with journalism to engage new target audiences**—for example, series on traffic, architecture, or housing.
- **Create spaces for reader involvement**—such as events, debates, and reader meetings.
- **Ask the local community for input before launching stories or themes**—especially for series-based content.
- **Make journalists visible and relatable**—for example, through stories that include them personally, or via podcasts and video.
- **Explain how you set editorial priorities and make decisions**—such as why certain stories are selected (or not).
- **Extend invitations**—such as to open editorial meetings, public events, debates, and newsroom visits from local residents.
- **Go out into the community**—for example, visit associations to explain your editorial choices and societal role. This builds trust and understanding, while also serving as an opportunity to encourage local tips and story ideas.

- **Define a shared editorial direction**—such as KLIO: Critical, Solution-Oriented, Inspiring, and Follow-Up. Create an editorial toolbox so that all staff members can easily apply a constructive journalistic approach in their daily work.



- **Produce targeted content for newcomers**—for example, on school routes, childcare institutions, and family life.
- **Create guides and overviews**—such as building plans and directories of local services.
- **Publish restaurant reviews to engage younger readers.**
- **Make journalists visible and human**—e.g., through video content and personal explanations.
- **Prioritize quality over quantity**—readers value carefully selected, well-crafted content.



- **Define a clear target audience**—e.g., families with children or young children—to better tailor content.
- **Consider topics such as lifestyle, family life, and everyday dilemmas that many people can relate to**—even outside the major cities.
- **Increase your presence on social media platforms like Instagram, particularly with content related to family life and health.**
- **Apply constructive journalism**—highlight solutions, not just problems—as this approach tends to be more motivating for readers.

- **Break with classical objectivity and show vulnerability**—this makes journalists more relatable.



- **Prioritize depth and quality over quantity**—long and in-depth articles will be read if they are well-written and relevant.
- **Put human faces on complex issues**—for example, farmers' experiences with environmental policy or the entrepreneurs behind financial reports.
- **Leverage nature as a local strength**—produce journalism in and about nature, ideally featuring local public figures and offering practical tips (e.g., walking routes, seasonal themes).



- **Be hyperlocal and present**—a strong local anchoring and visible presence create value and attract subscribers.
- **Practice constructive journalism**—focus on solutions, nuance, and a respectful tone, even when covering conflicts.
- **Prioritize thoroughness over speed**—better to be accurate and well-researched than to be the first to publish.
- **Highlight what is thriving**—showcase the positive, inspiring, and innovative aspects of the local area to strengthen its image.

**IF Fremad Nørhalne**



- **Celebrate your supporters** – Show that you value and appreciate their support, whether through a thank-you message, an event, or a special gift or benefit.



- **Establish local partnerships** – To increase awareness and visibility of the local media outlet.

### Camilla Mehlsen

- **Cultivate authenticity** – Make the journalist present as a person and express personality, engagement, and humanity. Reframe the role of the journalist as “good company,” and use the first-person voice when appropriate to strengthen the connection with the audience.
- **Foster transparency** – Show more of the journalistic process and explain editorial decisions, omissions, and reflections. Demonstrate that the journalist also has something at stake—for example, by sharing personal experiences (without necessarily being subjective).
- **Speak with rather than to users** – Ask readers for input, wishes, and feedback, and build communities around journalism where users feel genuinely invited to participate.
- **Rethink objectivity** – The ideal of “personal neutrality” can be replaced by professionalism, transparency, and thoroughness. Striving for objectivity does not mean one cannot show engagement or express viewpoints.
- **Embrace host-driven formats** – The role of the host creates relationships and can be used actively to foster trust-based communication.

NRK Buskerud



- **Investigate and explore local identity** – Ask questions such as “What connects us here?”
- **Use journalism to strengthen the sense of local pride and belonging.**

- **Actively celebrate citizens** – for example, through awards, recognitions, or profiles of local changemakers. Involve local stakeholders such as artists, associations, or young people in content or activities.
- **Create formats and content that invite participation and foster audience ownership** – Give citizens the opportunity to contribute suggestions, nominations, and responses.



### Rødovre Lokalt Nyt

- **Address citizens' problems** – Develop formats such as “Mission of the Month”, where the editorial team actively works to solve specific challenges raised by community members.
- **Involve local stakeholders** – Host meetings with associations, grassroots organizers, and municipal representatives to identify relevant and meaningful topics for journalistic coverage.
- **Engage young people and residents as co-creators** – For example, by teaching journalism in secondary schools and publishing student-produced content.
- **Bring journalism into real-life settings** – Report from places where everyday life unfolds—such as nursing homes, kindergartens, and football matches—to foster a sense of presence and dynamism.
- **Leverage existing communities** – Participate in and collaborate with already established local networks, rather than attempting to build new ones from scratch.



### Zetland

- **Use yourself** – Incorporate your own experiences and dilemmas as a driving force in the story.
- **Make the reader a co-player** – Ask open-ended questions and invite them to contribute.

- **Show that you don't have all the answers** – but are searching for them together with your readers.
- **Start with a personal essay** – and allow it to grow into a series if the topic calls for more.
- **Use narrative journalism and dramaturgical momentum.**
- **Use your personal experiences as an entry point to broader societal discussions.**
- **Move from an anonymous byline to a “host-driven” approach.**
- **Think of the media as a workshop** – not a factory; a place where experimentation and development happen in collaboration with users.

## Discussion: *To What Extent Can These Results and Insights Be Transferred to Other Local Media in Denmark?*

The insights derived from the study of the “new Svendborg resident,” along with the experiences gathered from other Danish local media outlets, collectively point to a shift toward more engaging, personal, and participatory local journalism. However, the question remains whether these findings and experiences can be generalized and applied more broadly across the country's other local media contexts.

On the one hand, many of the needs and media habits described in the study appear to be universal characteristics of a new generation of media users. The demand for authenticity, user involvement, community, and journalistic transparency is not necessarily location-specific but rather part of a broader media-cultural development. The tendency to seek meaningful, slow-paced, and explanatory content—and a certain fatigue with conflict-driven and sensational journalism—is well-documented in numerous studies and transcends both demographic and geographic boundaries.

At the same time, experiences from media such as Midtjyllands Avis, SkanderborgLIV, Det Nordjyske Mediehus, and Bornholms Tidende demonstrate that specific editorial approaches—such as a constructive mindset, clear audience targeting, a focus on proximity, and personal storytelling—have had positive impacts in very different parts of the country. This suggests that such methods possess a degree of robustness and can be applied in a range of local contexts, provided they are tailored to local conditions and resources.

However, one should be cautious about assuming that the needs of a single target group or the cultural dynamics of one community can be directly transferred to another. Svendborg is not Randers or Thisted, and local identity, migration patterns, demographic composition, and competition from other media outlets vary significantly from region to region. Any media organization aiming to implement conclusions from this study must therefore carry out its own in-depth audience and user analysis to determine which values and editorial priorities align with its specific community and readership.

Moreover, transitioning to a more community-oriented and personal form of journalism requires a cultural shift within the editorial team—both in self-perception and in practice. Not all newsrooms necessarily have the capacity or willingness to work in a more transparent, subjective, and dialogical way. There may be professional or institutional barriers that make it difficult to adopt such methods.

Finally, it should be emphasized that many of the initiatives mentioned—such as audio formats, editorial engagement in the local community, user involvement, and aesthetic innovation—require investments in both time and competencies. For smaller local media outlets operating under financial pressure and with limited staff, such a transformation can be challenging unless pursued gradually and with clear strategic priorities. In this context, it may be worth considering whether collaborations with other local institutions could support such efforts—for example, in co-hosting public events.

Below, I have listed ten recommendations that, based on the above discussion, I believe may be transferable to other local media outlets:

**1. Increased Reader Engagement Through Personal and Relatable Journalism.**

Audiences respond positively to journalism that features a personal voice and a clearly identifiable author. The visible presence and authenticity of journalists foster trust and build stronger relationships with readers.

**2. User Involvement as a Strategy for Relevance and Community-Building.**

Active listening and audience participation in idea generation, topic selection, and debate enhance a sense of ownership. Media outlets that invite users into the process achieve higher levels of engagement.

**3. Emphasis on Constructive Journalism Over Conflict and Alarmism.**

Content that offers explanations, solutions, and broader perspectives is preferred over superficial and conflict-driven coverage. Constructive formats provide users with a sense of agency and hope.

**4. Clear Audience Understanding and Editorial Prioritization**

Targeted content that reflects users' everyday lives and needs increases relevance. Newsrooms with a clear idea of whom they are writing for produce more precise and valuable journalism.

**5. A Sense of Community and Local Pride as a Driving Force**

Audiences want to be part of something bigger—not just passive consumers of information. Media that successfully reflect and strengthen the local community foster loyalty and belonging.

**6. Aesthetic Design and Visual Identity**

A modern, accessible, and appealing visual design enhances usability and willingness to pay. For younger audiences especially, the ability to identify with the media brand matters.

**7. Audio Formats as a Complement to Text-Based Journalism**

Podcasts, short news segments, and serialized audio formats with local anchoring have strong potential to reach new and younger audiences. Listening to articles aligns with younger users' flexible media habits and can help make journalism feel more personal.

**8. Focus on Practical, Local, and Everyday-Relevant Content**

Content should be locally rooted, concrete, and help users better understand and navigate their community. Topics such as family life, local culture, nature, and business—told through human-centered angles—resonate strongly.

**9. Transparency and Openness About Editorial Decisions**

Audiences want to understand why a story matters and how it was produced. Increased transparency helps counteract the crisis of trust and enhances journalistic credibility.

**10. Host-Driven Journalism Over the Traditional Sender-Receiver Model**

Media should aim to speak *with* their users—not *to* them. A more dialogical, participatory role positions the journalist not only as a communicator, but also as a fellow human being.

# Appendix

## Appendix 1: Interview Guide

### QUESTIONS

1. What was the reason you chose to settle in Svendborg?
2. Why have you stayed?

### Media Habits and Consumption

3. Which media do you use?  
Do you pay for any of them?
4. What do you use media/news for?  
(To stay informed about the local community? To stay informed about the world? To get updates? To gain explanations? To be inspired? To feel hopeful?)
5. How do you prefer to access your media?  
(On your phone, TV, reading newspapers, listening?)
6. At what time of day do you typically consume media/news?
7. Does your media use differ between morning and evening? Between weekdays and weekends? Do you (and when do you) prefer quick updates or longer articles?

### **How Do We Get You to *Fyns Amts Avis*?**

**8.** Do you think it's important to have a local news outlet covering your area?

**9.** What should a local media outlet provide you with?

- Hyperlocal news about your neighborhood/town?
- National news—or do you get that elsewhere?
- Updates?
- Inspiration?
- Hope?
- Explanations and background?
- Possible solutions to local issues?

**10.** Which topics or areas are important for a local media outlet to cover?

- When do you expect us to be there for you?

**Present the site and explain how many stories are published per day and what the focus is.**

**11.** What do you think of that distribution?

- Should we publish more, with less depth (shorter pieces) Or publish less, with more depth (longer pieces)?

**12.** What comes to mind when I say—or when you see—Fyns Amts Avis? What do you associate it with?

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### **More Than Just a Newspaper – Or?**

**13.** Do you know we have a podcast?

**14.** Do you think it's a good thing that we produce audio content?

- Would you use it?
- What topics would interest you?
- Should we include guest speakers—or just us discussing the news?
- Would you be interested in thematic series?

**15.** Should a local media outlet do more than just publish news?

- Should it host events?
- Invite people in?
- Facilitate debates and talks?
- And what topics would interest you in such formats?

### **Willingness to Pay**

**16.** Based on everything you’ve shared—would you be willing to pay for such a media product?

- How much?
- What would it take for you to pay for a local news outlet?

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