

Mobile News Feed User Study

March 2018

Prepared by Katie Elfering



Mobile News Feed User Study

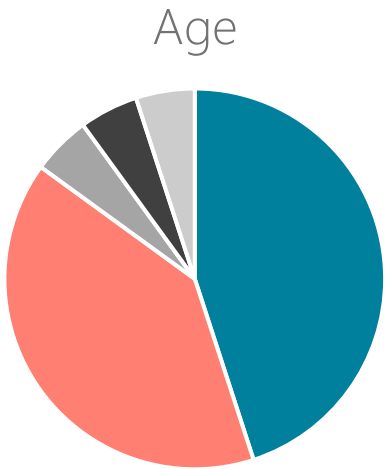
March 2018

Prepared by Katie Elfering



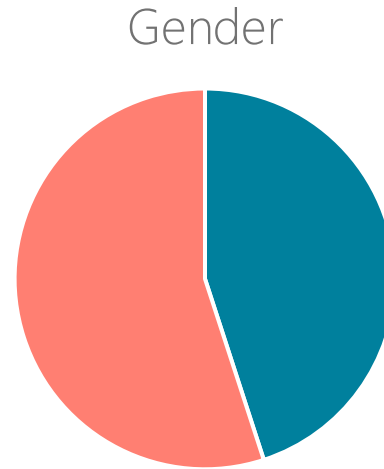
Research Methodology

- We recruited 20 participants for this study, including 5 primary Bing users, 5 primary Google users, and 10 “news consumers.”
 - “News consumers” were defined as people who use their mobile device to engage with news content at least 3 times per day.
- Participants engaged with both live content and a prototype on their mobile devices.



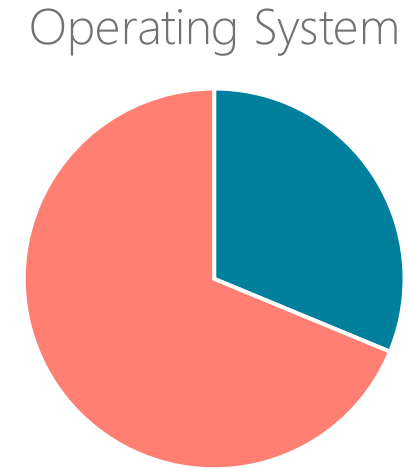
■ 18-24 ■ 25-34 ■ 35-44 ■ 45-54 ■ 55+

4/5 Bing users were 25-34 years old.
Half of news consumers were 18-24 years old.



■ Male ■ Female

All Bing users were men.
8/10 news consumers were women.



■ Android ■ iOS

7/10 news consumers use iOS.
4/5 Google users also use iOS.



Key Findings and Implications

- Mobile browsers are a major part of people's daily lives and most people use them, at least in some way, to consume news.
- People use mobile browsers to both get headlines (from search engines and trusted sources) and to search for more information on news topics.
- Implication: Bing's presence on mobile browsers is important and provides an important brand engagement point— but awareness is incredibly low and needs to be improved, as users have already established mobile browser habits.



Key Findings and Implications

- Bing's mobile experience was pleasantly surprising to most people, especially the Trending on Bing headlines included on the home page.
- People were engaged with the news vertical, but likely would not have found it or used it outside of this study.
- Implication: Building awareness, both of Bing's mobile browser experience and the news vertical, is key to growing habitual usage. We need to make it easier for people to find Bing and to find our amazing features, like the news vertical, through in-product prompts and promotions.



Key Findings and Implications

- The For You/Feed concept was well-received, although many people expressed concerns about how it would learn their preferences and about privacy.
- People could not find the settings to personalize their feed, and expressed concern about the log-in requirement.
- People want easier, more immediate ways to personalize their feed to make it more useful and engaging.
- Implication: It's imperative to better communicate the concept of the Feed to users immediately, and allow for immediate and ongoing personalization outside of the settings/log-in.



Key Findings and Implications

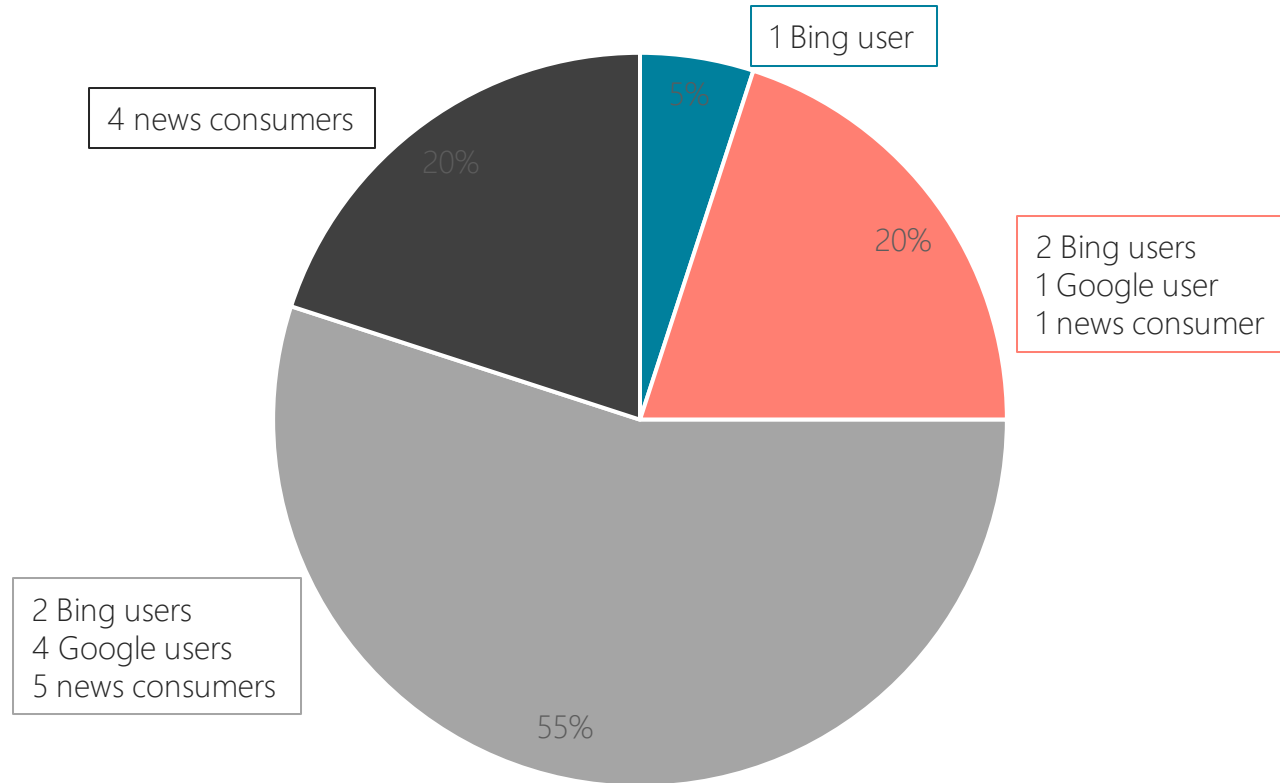
- People gravitated towards designs that had larger images, brighter colors/designs, immediate customization options, and contextual references.
- Implication: Improve our design to resonate better with users by incorporating more color, more customization, and more context.



Mobile Behaviors



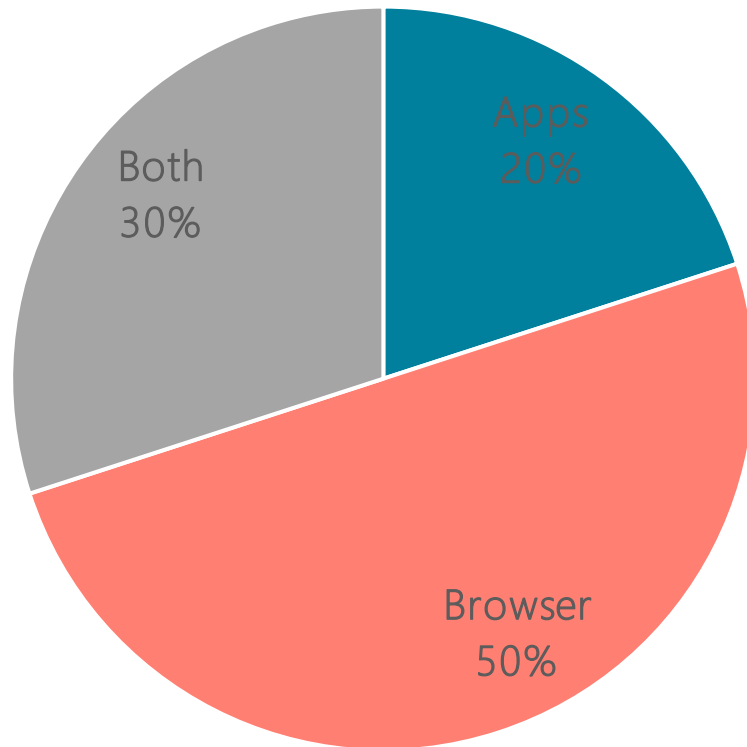
Have you ever or do you currently use the Bing app on your mobile device?



- Yes, I use the Bing app regularly
- Yes, I have used it in the past but don't use it regularly
- No, I have never used it but I am aware of the app
- No, I have never used it and I was not aware that the app existed



Which do you prefer to use on your mobile device?



- Users were asked to consider whether they preferred to use a mobile browser or mobile apps for most tasks that they complete on their mobile device.
- Most users indicated that they preferred using a browser, as much of their mobile behavior involved search.
 - These users indicated that they had developed habits around browser usage to get quick information and to look up general information.
 - Specifically, many users said that they did NOT go to apps when they wanted to search for something, and instead opted to use their mobile browser.
- Those who preferred apps liked that apps were more direct and were built more specifically for mobile.
 - These users commented that browsers often felt like they were built for a desktop and then just “shrunk down” for mobile.
- Some users commented that it depended on the task they were completing, and that they would use either an app or a browser, depending on the situation.

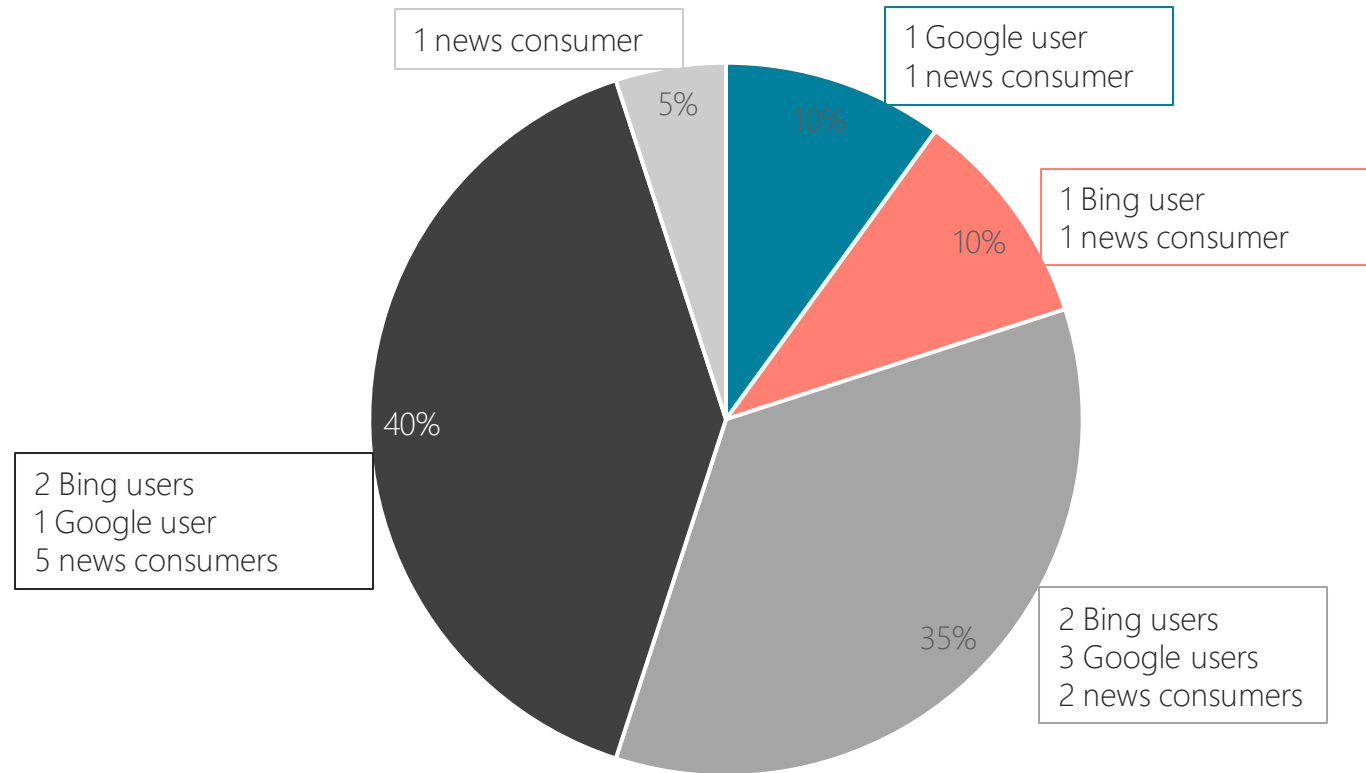


95% of participants said
they use a mobile
browser multiple times
per day.

- Users indicated that they use their browser most often for searching (as opposed to using favorites/bookmarks or going directly to web sites).
 - Most users said they used their browsers when they needed quick information about a topic or when they wanted to fact check information they heard elsewhere.
 - As one user put it: "I use my browser to search when I'm wondering something, or when I need to solve something."
- 7 users specifically mentioned using their browser to get the latest news.
 - These users said they often use their browser to get information about news stories they heard about somewhere else (as opposed to using a news vertical).
- Half of users also said they regularly use their mobile browsers to shop online.
 - These users were quick to clarify that they used their mobile browsers more for shopping (i.e. browsing, getting information) and not for buying (i.e. actually making the purchase).



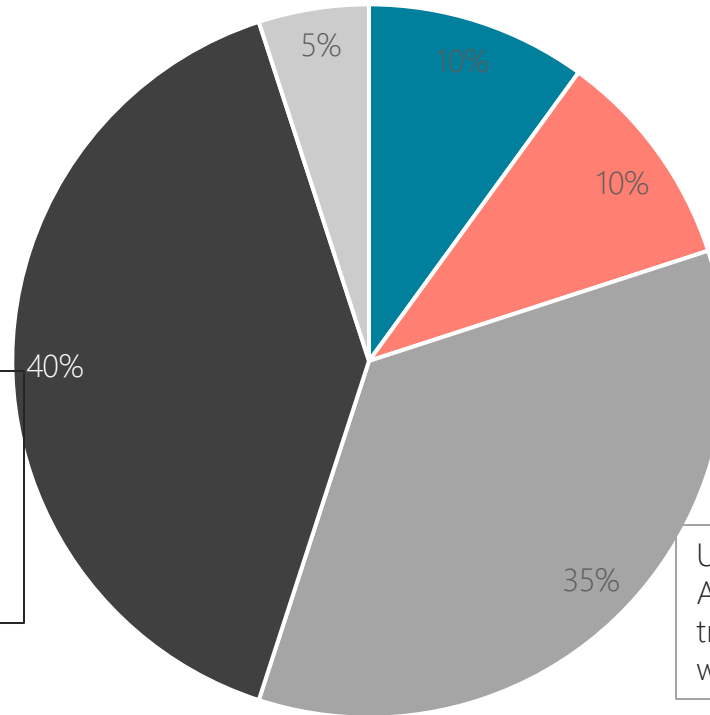
Which of these do you prefer as a way to consume news on your mobile device?



- I prefer to get push notifications from news apps, although I rarely/never click on them to open the app and read more.
- I prefer to get push notifications from news apps, and I often/always click on them to open the app and read more.
- I prefer to go directly to a news app to read the news.
- I prefer to use a mobile browser to go directly to my favorite websites to read the news.
- I prefer to use built-in news notifications through my operating system (like Apple News).



Which of these do you prefer as a way to consume news on your mobile device?



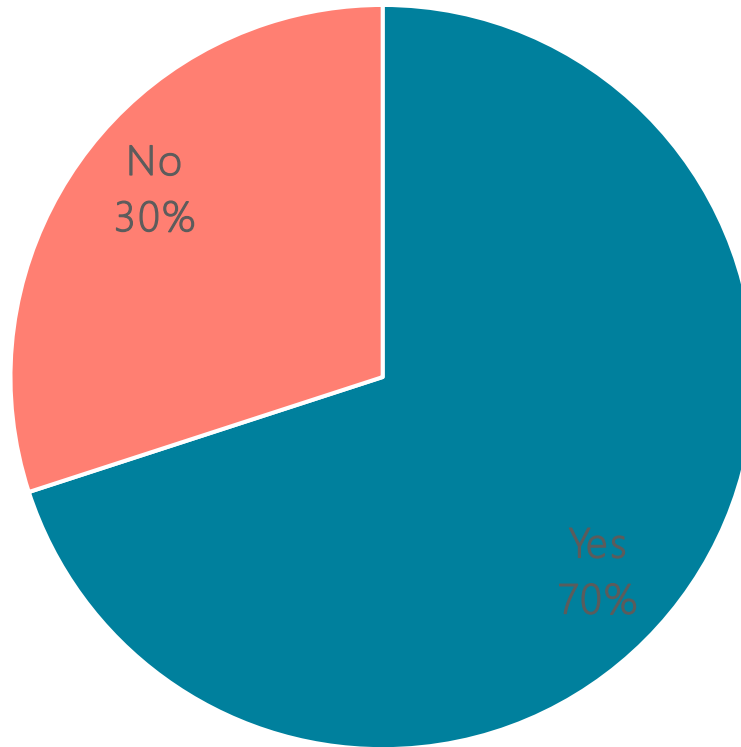
Users who preferred a mobile browser said they had favorite sites, like CNN.com or BBC.com, that they visit daily to check the latest headlines. Their behavior was driven by trusted sites/sources and the ability to search topics of interest via a search engine.

Users who preferred a news app often included built-in apps, like Apple News, in this category. Their behavior was also rooted in trust in specific sources/apps, as well as in established habits that were enforced by notifications.

- I prefer to get push notifications from news apps, although I rarely/never click on them to open the app and read more.
- I prefer to get push notifications from news apps, and I often/always click on them to open the app and read more.
- I prefer to go directly to a news app to read the news.
- I prefer to use a mobile browser to go directly to my favorite websites to read the news.
- I prefer to use built-in news notifications through my operating system (like Apple News).



Do you ever use your mobile browser to consume news content?



Users who said they don't use a mobile browser to consume news content said it was because they preferred to use apps that allow them to focus on specific sources/topics.

Users who said they do use a mobile browser to consume news content said they do it very often and have trusted sites that they go to regularly.

These users also said they use their mobile browser to search for news topics they have heard about elsewhere.

News consumers were more likely to say they use their browser to consume news.



Bing Mobile Experience

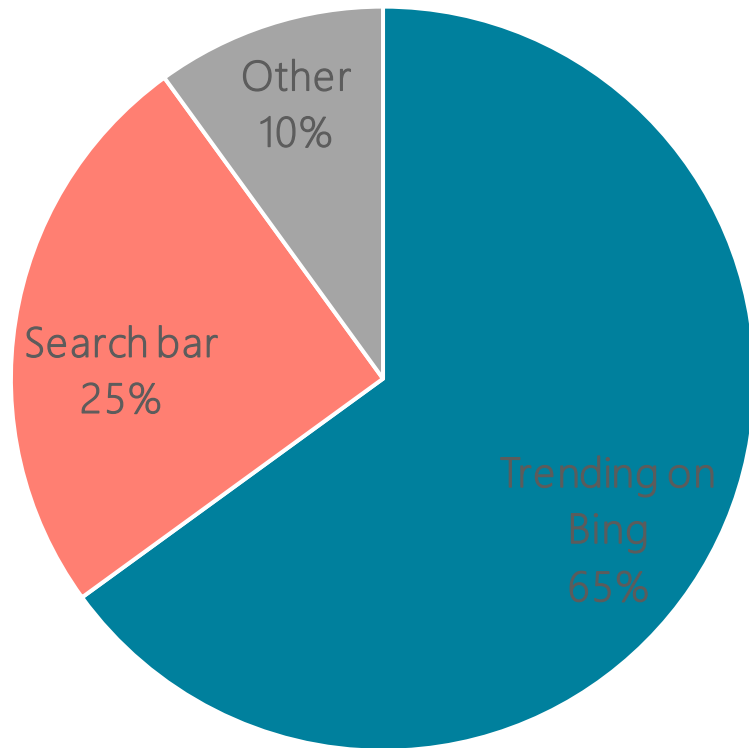


Users felt Bing was useful but cluttered

- Most users, including primary Bing users, had not seen the Bing mobile experience.
- Users had generally positive reactions to the experience.
 - Users felt like the design was clean and easy to navigate. Users liked the colorful and engaging content on the page.
 - As one user said upon opening the page: "Oh, this is great! I'm going to start using this!"
- Users appreciated Trending on Bing and liked the easy access to top news stories.
 - Some users felt that the headlines/titles were catchy and appropriately short; others felt that they did not provide enough information to warrant a click.
 - Users agreed that the images associated with each story helped to bring additional context to the topic and they liked their impact on the overall design of the experience.
 - However, users felt that the entire Trending on Bing section could be better organized or categorized.
- Users had mixed reactions to the home page image.
 - Some users found it incredibly appealing and liked seeing it as a starting point.
 - But more users questioned its purpose. They found it distracting and confusing, as it felt like a lot of "wasted space" and "like it wasn't loading right."
- Despite liking the design, many users mentioned that there was "too much stuff" on the page that would be distracting if they came here to search.
 - Users commented that there was "a lot" to scroll through and that they found it hard to find the content they were looking for.
 - As one user said: "This is great for a portal, but not for a search engine."



How would you use Bing in your mobile browser to catch up with the news?

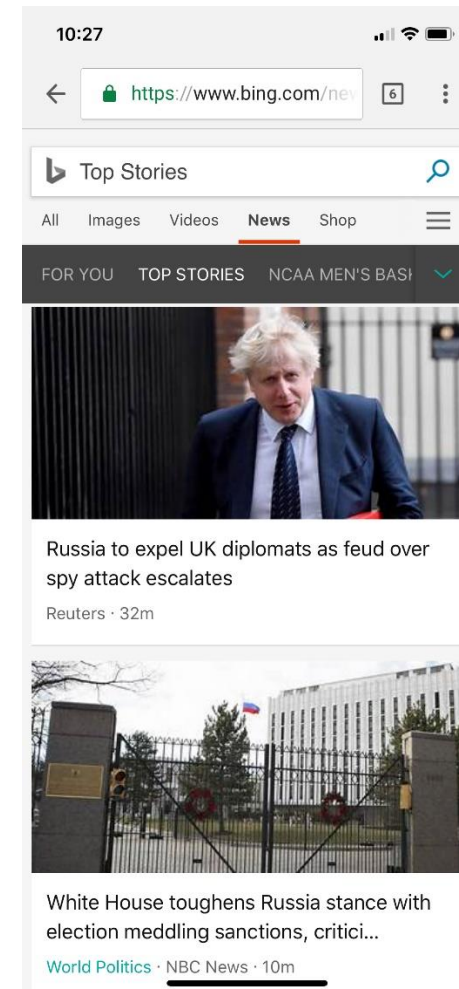


- Most users said they would scroll through the Trending on Bing headlines and click on articles of interest.
 - News consumers were the most likely to opt for this tactic, with Bing users more likely to use the search bar.
 - Users did say this would be more useful if the Trending on Bing topics were more personalized to their interests.
- Users who said they would use the search bar indicated they would use “news” as their query to get the top headlines.
 - These users also said they would type a trusted source, like CNN, into the search bar to go there to see the headlines.



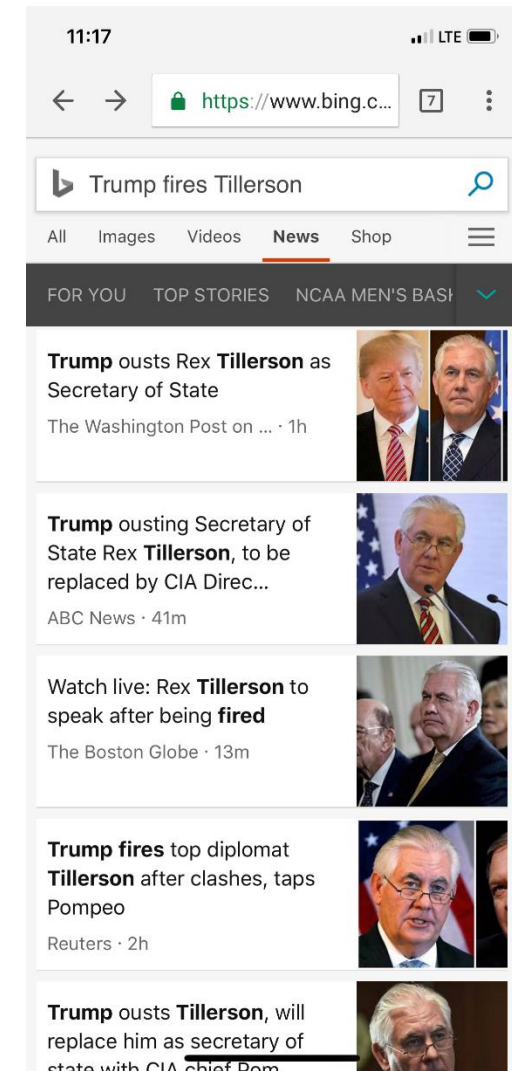
Users were not aware of Bing News, found it hard to find

- Only 3 out of the 20 participants in the study had any awareness of the Bing News vertical.
- While users were able to easily find the News header and get to the News vertical in the study, almost all of them indicated that they never would have found it– or even thought to look for it– had they not been prompted.
 - A few users commented that the News header was difficult to see and blended in to the design too much.
 - Users also felt that there should be a more visible and direct path to the News vertical from the home page, as it took too many clicks for them to get there.



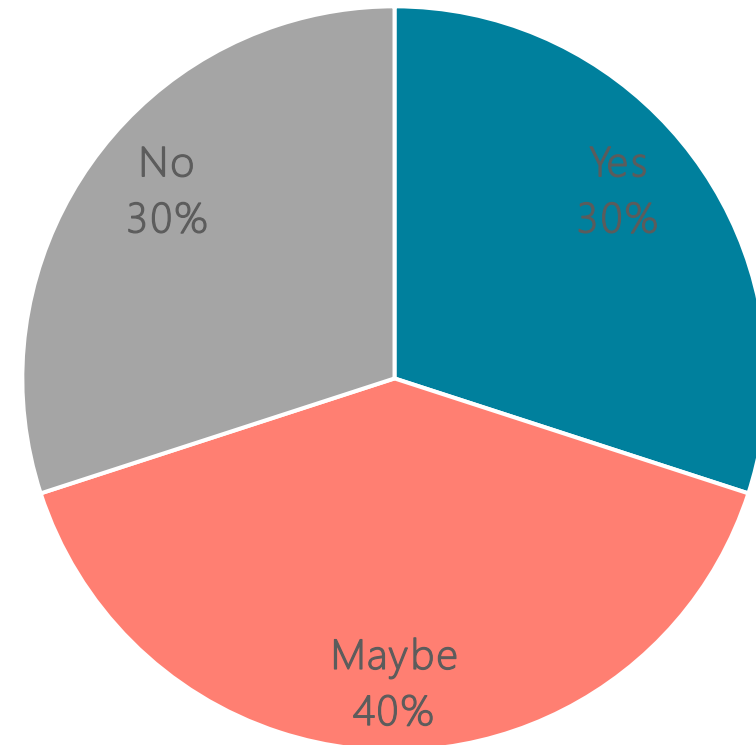
Users found Bing News vertical useful, unbiased

- Despite the lack of awareness of the Bing News vertical, most users had a positive reaction to it.
- Users especially liked that they could see multiple sources on one topic, which led many to point out how unbiased it felt.
 - Users did question how the content was ordered/organized, and wondered if it was based on trustworthiness/credibility or popularity.
 - A few users were happy to see that “not all the content is from MSN,” as they had expected it would be.
- Users felt the layout was clean and easy to use, although a few felt it was cluttered.
 - Some users commented that the white background was “too white” and asked for more contrast on the page.
 - Users again asked for categorization or organization by topic to help minimize clutter.
- Users immediately asked how they could personalize this content (without being prompted), although no users noticed the For You tab at this point.



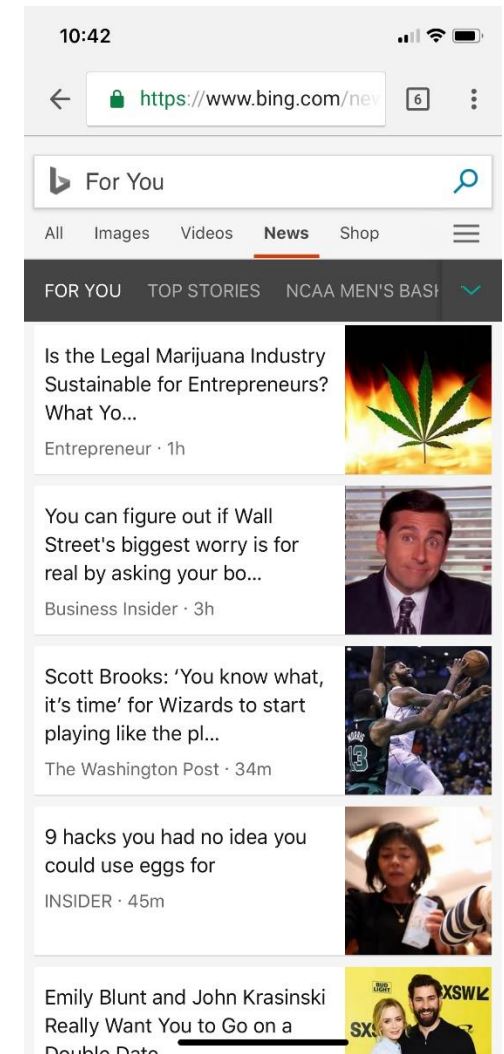
- Users were unsure what to expect from the “For You” tab.
 - Bing users, especially, said they were not sure what this tab would include.
- Users generally expected to see some sort of personalized content, although they did not know how it would be personalized.
 - Users did not understand how Bing would know their preferences, interests, or search history (if they hadn’t used it before) to create a customized experience.
 - Some users expected to see an option to personalize the content if they clicked on this header.
 - Others assumed it would be tied to search history or data stored on their phone, but then expressed concerns about privacy.
 - Users used words like “Orwellian” and “creepy” when talking about how Bing might be curating content based on their data.
- When asked if they would have engaged with this feature outside of the study, users were ambivalent and unsure.
 - Those who said “yes” said they would have clicked on it out of curiosity.
 - Those who said “no” said they would not click because of a lack of confidence that it would know their interests or out of privacy concerns.
 - Google users were more likely than Bing users to say they would not click on it, mostly for privacy reasons.

Would you engage with the “For You” tab if you saw it outside of this study?



Users like For You concept, not execution

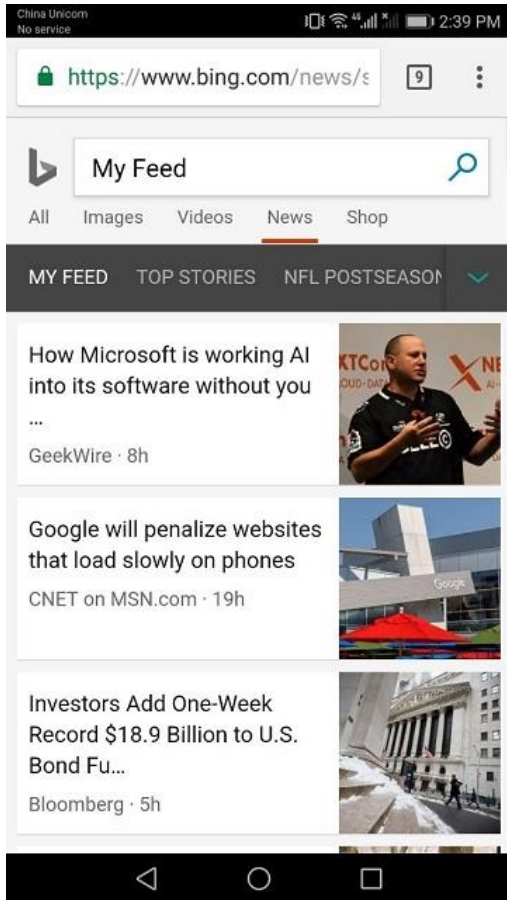
- After clicking on “For You,” users liked the concept, but expressed concerns about the execution.
- Because users had not personalized the experience or set their interests, many felt that the content was not catered to their tastes.
 - Many users acknowledged that if they had personalized the content, they would find the feature more useful.
 - Users did like the content that appeared (which was mostly popular news stories), and assumed that the feature would improve and provide more personalized content.
 - Despite not seeing personalized content, users liked the concept.
- Users were asked to show how they would personalize the content, and struggled to find settings to do so.
 - Almost all users immediately scrolled through the categories at the top, assuming they could pick topics of interest there. They were frustrated that they couldn't.
 - Users then scrolled down, assuming there was a settings option at the bottom, but they got caught in infinite scroll and became frustrated (again).
 - Many users assumed there was a passive way for this content to be personalized, but expressed concern about this and said they preferred more active customization options.
 - Only a few users, mostly news consumers, found the settings feature.
 - Many users could not see the menu while in the News vertical.
 - Users who found the settings were frustrated that it required a log-in and expressed concerns about privacy.
 - All users expressed frustration at how hard it was to find these settings/options, and most gave up without finding a way to do this task.
- Users offered suggestions to improve the “For You” feature.
 - The most common suggestion was to make it easier to personalize the content without having to find a settings option.
 - Users also suggested more context around how content was chosen, removing the log-in requirement, organizing the content by category, and providing an introduction to the feature for first-time users.



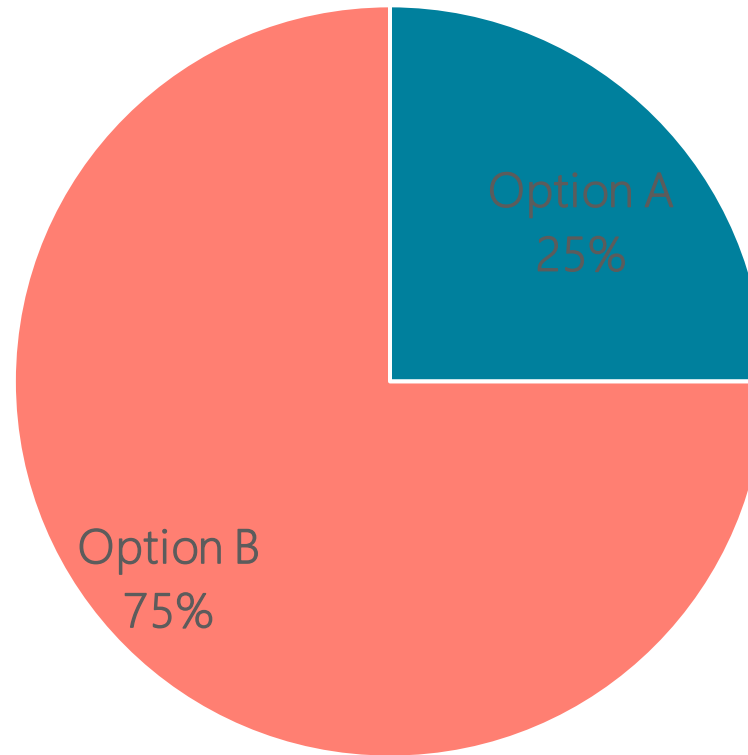
Design Concept Review



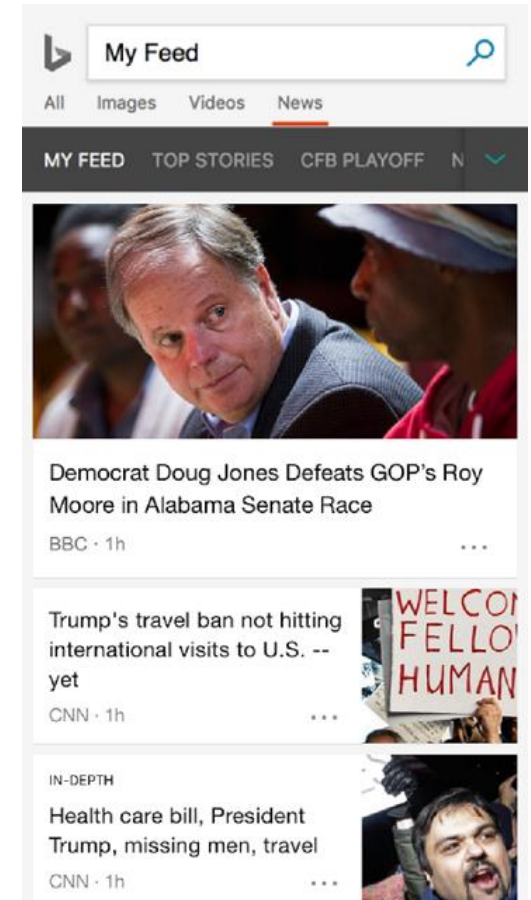
Option A



Which design do you prefer?



Option B

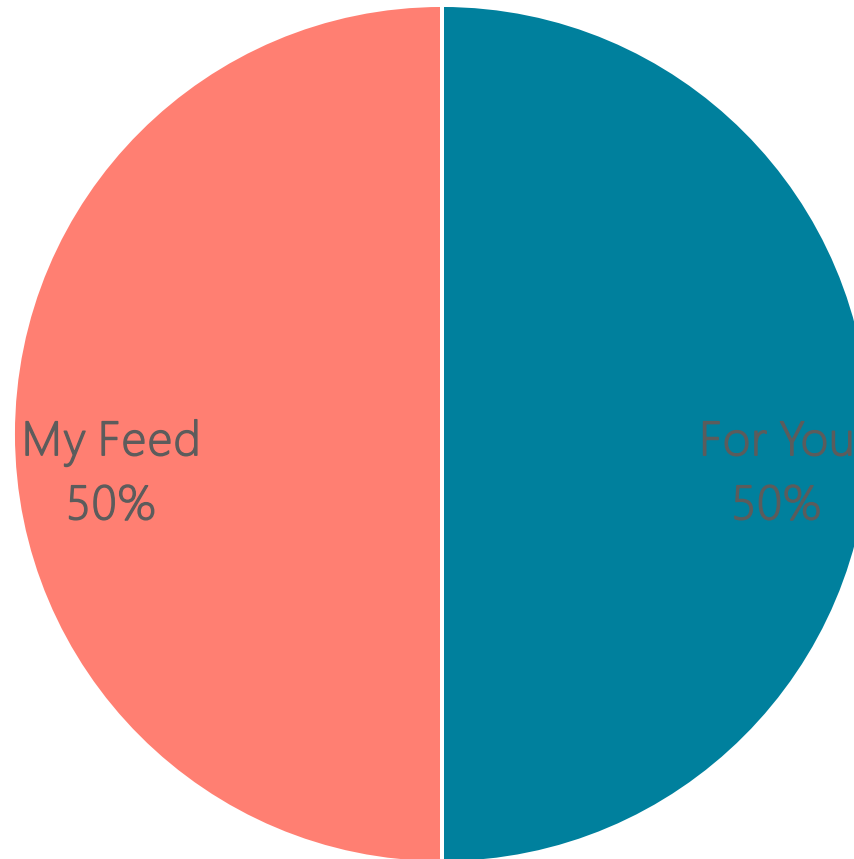


- Users preferred the larger image and layout in Option B.
 - They felt that it looked sleeker and more engaging than Option A.
 - Users also said the larger image made them more likely to click on the content, although they questioned if this indicated a different level of importance.
- The users who preferred Option A felt that it was better designed and easier to read.



Which name do you prefer for this feature?

- Users who preferred “My Feed” said it felt more like they were in control of the content they saw.
 - Users liked the idea that they were the ones setting their preferences, with some saying it felt “less creepy” than having Bing do it for them.
- Users also liked the active connotation of “My Feed,” as many had expressed an interest in setting their own preferences.
 - They felt like “For You” felt more like passive recommendations, whereas “My Feed” felt more like active choices.



- Users who preferred “For You” felt more like content was being recommended to them
 - They felt that “My Feed” was more closely tied to what they would post or share, whereas “For You” was content that was selected and pushed to them.
 - Users associated “My Feed” more with social media than news content.
- Users felt like “For You” sounded more personalized and pleasant.
 - Users commented that “For You” felt like Bing was doing something nice for them by curating this content.

4/5 Google users preferred “My Feed.”

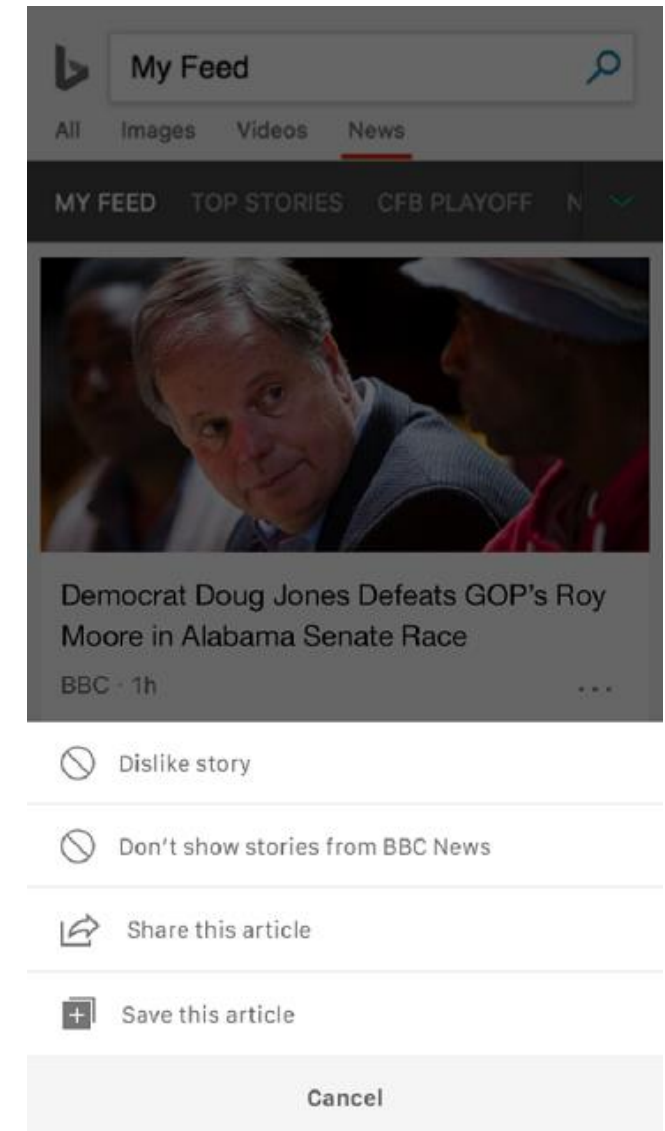
4/5 Bing users preferred “For You.”

News consumers were evenly split.



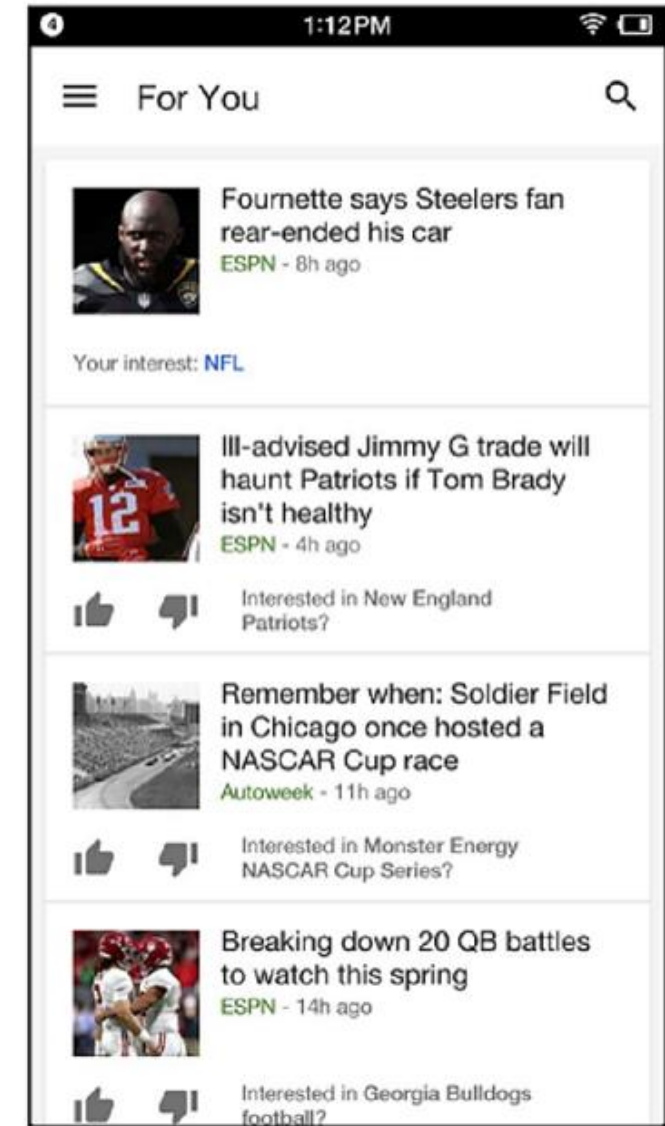
Users loved the menu options

- All users loved seeing the menu options, and found them incredibly necessary and useful for this feature.
- Users felt like this menu provided the needed personalization options they were lacking when shown the concept previously.
 - Users agreed that having these options made the feed feel more customized.
 - Users did express concerns about having to find/open this menu on every article, and asked about making it a more universal feature.
- Some users felt that while the options presented were useful, they were unsure how to find/engage with this menu.
 - Users felt that the menu design was not very engaging and that it was hard to notice/engage with.
 - Users also wondered why it was “buried” under the three dot menu, and asked to have it more visible within the feed or on articles.
- Users found the “Dislike story” and “Don’t show stories from [source]” options most useful.
 - While these options were well-liked, some users expressed concerns about how they could create or contribute to bias or filter bubbles.
 - News consumers were more likely to find the “Save” option most useful.
 - “Share” was not a useful feature for most people.
- Users offered suggestions for additional options (without being prompted to).
 - Users suggested adding a “Like story” and “Show more from this source” option as a counterbalance to the dislike options.
 - Users also suggested a way to provide more feedback on why they dislike a source or story, including an option to flag content as fake news.
 - Another suggestion was to let users tag specific sources as “trusted” or “preferred.”



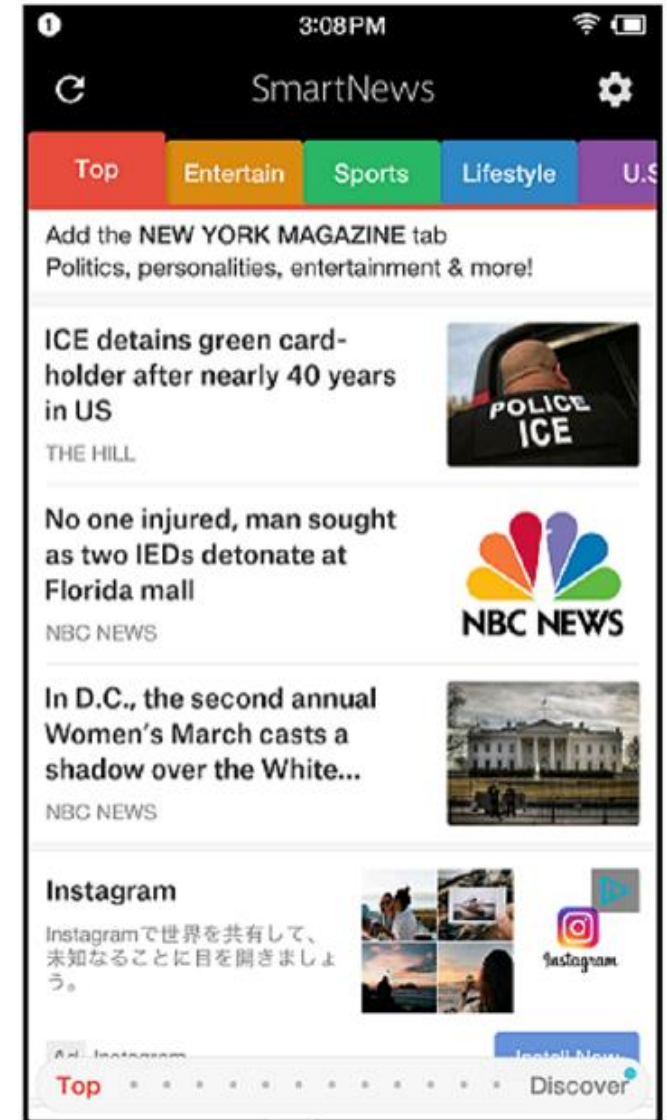
Option A had clear customization, too small images

- Users immediately commented on the personalization and contextual components visible in Option A (Google).
 - They liked that they could see why specific content was in their feed, although some felt that these categories were too specific.
 - They also liked that they could immediately personalize the content using the thumbs up/down feature.
 - Some users preferred the customization menu they had previously seen with the features to mute sources.
 - A few users worried about this level of customization and how it could limit what they see.
- Users had mixed reactions to the design of this feed.
 - Some users felt it was sleek and easy to use.
 - Other users felt the images were too small and that there was too much white space on the page.
 - One users said this feed felt more focused on “function over design.”



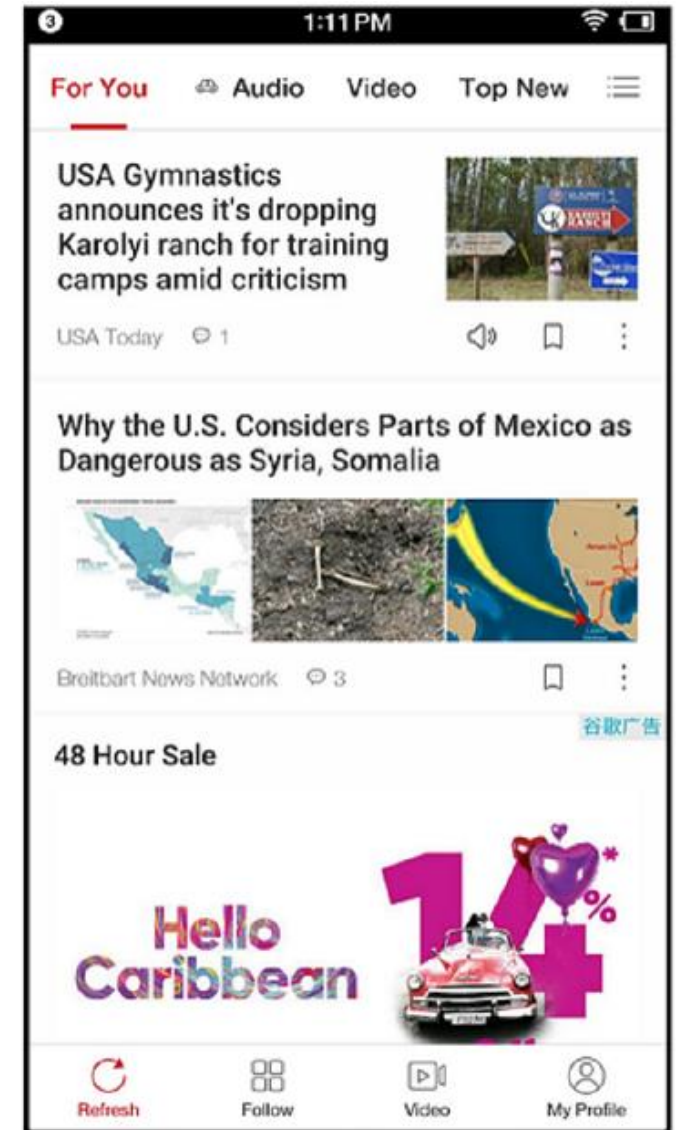
Option B was colorful, cluttered, unclear

- All users immediately commented on the colorful design of Option B (SmartNews), although with mixed reactions.
 - Most users liked the colorful design and felt that it was eye-catching and engaging.
 - However, some users found it garish and distracting, saying it was too hard to follow what was on the page.
- Users liked the tabbed organization but were unclear if that was part of their feed or if this content was personalized.
 - Users liked the clear categories at the top of the page and felt that was a useful way to navigate the content.
 - However, users were unsure if the content shown was a customized feed or simply a rundown of the news.
 - They also felt it lacked a way to personalize the content or any indication of why it was appearing in this feed.
 - Users also felt that the content was missing time stamps to show how recent it was.



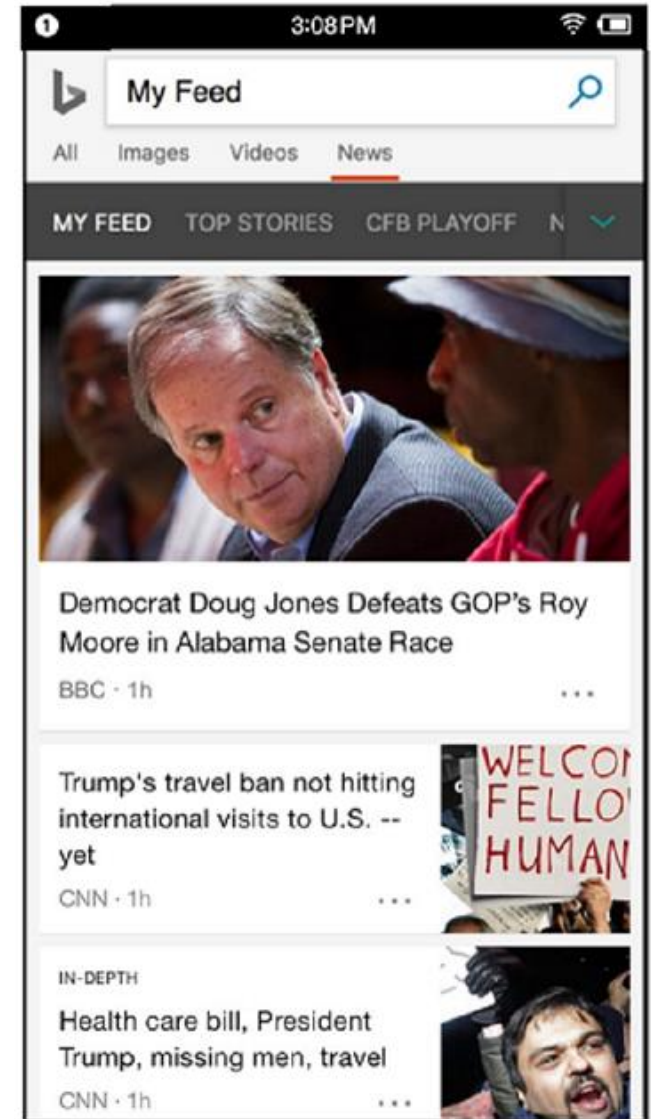
Option C felt cluttered, ad-focused, uninspired

- Users did not have positive reactions to Option C.
- They found it confusing and hard to navigate, despite the “For You” heading indicating that it was a personalized feed.
 - Users felt that the layout had too many things going on.
 - They were unclear about many of the icons and what they would do, and they felt that it was missing any indicator of how to customize the content.
 - Users also felt that the top and bottom navigation bars conflicted with each other and were unclear.
 - There was not enough content showing for most users’ preference.
- Users did not like seeing an ad in their feed.
 - This was the biggest issue for most users, as they felt there should not be ads in this feature.
- Users felt that the design was cluttered and boring.
 - Users didn’t like the white background on this design.
 - They felt like there was no organization and that it was very aggressive.
 - Many users said that this feed was “not inviting” and “not appealing.”

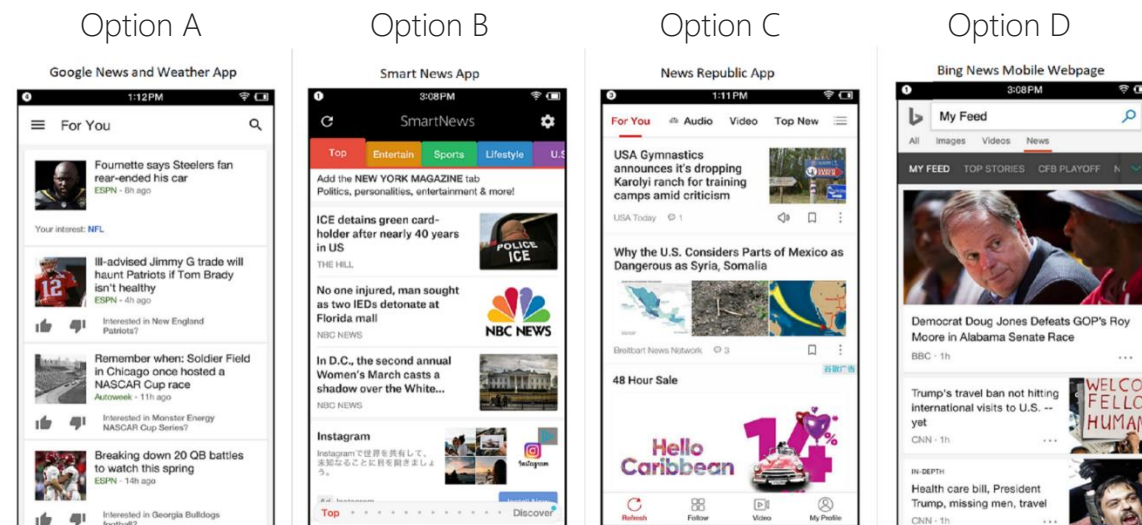
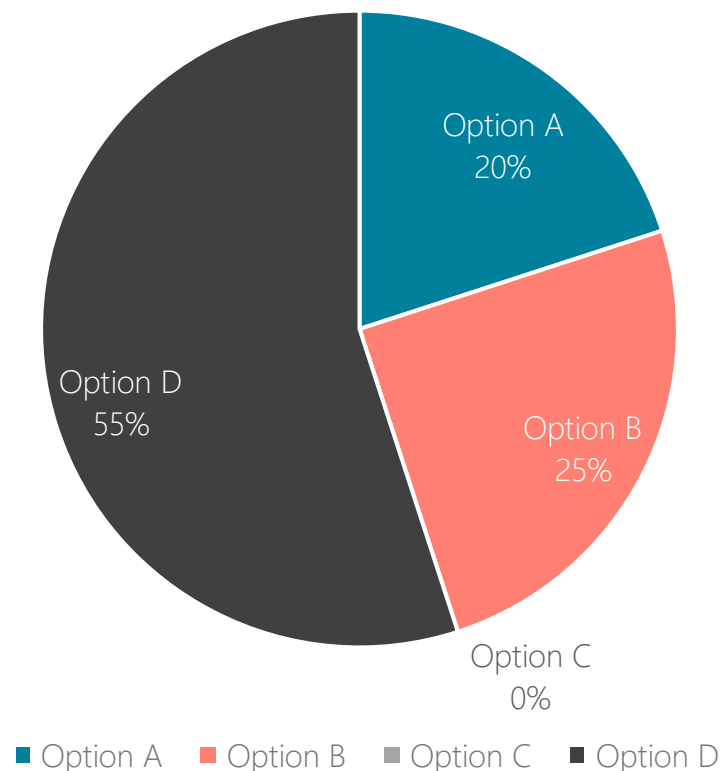


Option D felt familiar, well-designed

- Almost all users recognized Option D (Bing) and immediately said it looked familiar.
- Users liked that it was clear that this was a personalized feed and tied to news, thanks the headers.
 - Users felt it was clear that this was customized to them because of the “My Feed” title.
 - Many users said that this design felt like the easiest option not actually use.
 - Users also liked that there were clear sources and time stamps in this design.
- Users liked this layout and design.
 - Users liked the large image at the top, saying it was eye-catching and engaging.
 - However, users felt that it could include more color, and suggested emulating the colorful design of Option B.
- Users wanted to see more immediate ways to personalize this content and more context about why it was being shown to them.
 - Many users commented that combining the customization tools of Option A with this design would make a perfect option.



Which design concept did you prefer?



Users preferred Option D (Bing) to the other options presented.

Users felt that Option D was the clearest and easiest to use, and they liked the large image at the top.

However, users liked specific features of both Option A and Option B. They liked the immediate personalization and contextual tags in Option A. They liked the bright colors and organization of Option B.



© 2013 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. Microsoft, Windows, Windows Vista and other product names are or may be registered trademarks and/or trademarks in the U.S. and/or other countries. The information herein is for informational purposes only and represents the current view of Microsoft Corporation as of the date of this presentation. Because Microsoft must respond to changing market conditions, it should not be interpreted to be a commitment on the part of Microsoft, and Microsoft cannot guarantee the accuracy of any information provided after the date of this presentation. MICROSOFT MAKES NO WARRANTIES, EXPRESS, IMPLIED OR STATUTORY, AS TO THE INFORMATION IN THIS PRESENTATION.



MICROSOFT CONFIDENTIAL