

21ST CENTURY FOX/SKY MERGER INQUIRY

Summary of hearing with BuzzFeed UK on 17 October 2017

Introduction

1. BuzzFeed explained that it is a digital news and entertainment company. Its target audience comprises of readers under 35.
2. BuzzFeed explained that it has a team of dedicated investigators and reporters who generate original content and news for the online news website. BuzzFeed News employs approximately [redacted] people in the UK.
3. [redacted]
4. BuzzFeed stated that with new online platforms emerging, the way that news stories are amplified has to adapt regularly.
5. BuzzFeed stated that it at times collaborates with other news providers to investigate and report on stories. BuzzFeed stated that it hasn't yet collaborated with Sky News, though this has not been a formal decision.

Editorial approach

6. BuzzFeed stated that the majority of editorial decisions are made in the UK. At times, editorial stances may need to be discussed with BuzzFeed's head office in the US especially if they are considered to relate to controversial matters. For example, BuzzFeed explained that occasionally the global editors may discuss the approach to a particularly prominent news story.
7. BuzzFeed explained that its editorial approach is decided largely according to the interests of BuzzFeed's readership. BuzzFeed put forward housing and mental health issues as examples of something that BuzzFeed would report on as they are pertinent and of interest to readership of under 35s.
8. BuzzFeed stated that it does not take a political stance on its editorial lines.
9. BuzzFeed explained that editorial lines and news coverage of other news providers do not determine its editorial approach. BuzzFeed decides what stories to cover independently and reports on them from a unique angle.

10. BuzzFeed explained that it has a unique perspective on stories that is mainly relevant to readers under 35. Nevertheless, it can be considered as in competition with all other news providers.
11. [✂]
12. BuzzFeed stated that the positioning of stories on its website is not considered of most importance to the UK business. This is because most UK readers do not go directly to the website. BuzzFeed explained that they mainly consume specific BuzzFeed news stories via other online platforms.
13. BuzzFeed explained that BuzzFeed has a proprietary metric system to measure the success of its stories.

Views on media influence

14. BuzzFeed stated that it does have influence on public policy through reporting on stories that have significant impact. BuzzFeed gave the example of its reporting on the charity Kids Company.
15. BuzzFeed stated that it does not see a simple difference between the levels of influence exercised by online and offline news providers. The most important factor in determining influence is the level of concern people have for a particular topic of news, regardless of whether it is reported on television or online.
16. BuzzFeed stated that there is a legacy perception amongst people that broadcast news is more trustworthy because television has historically been regulated more strictly.
17. BuzzFeed stated that its readership trusts it as a news provider because of the particular angle and style of reporting BuzzFeed takes on stories.
18. BuzzFeed stated that Sky News does not appear to take any particular political editorial line in its reporting.
19. BuzzFeed stated that it is very difficult to infer what the particular political stance of any UK 24-hour news channel. UK news channels, in covering a variety of news, do not clearly express what their political stance is.
20. BuzzFeed stated that over the past ten to fifteen years newspapers have allowed more comment and opinion to appear in their publications.
21. BuzzFeed stated that it would be quite difficult for any news provider to start from scratch and create brand awareness within a short period of time.

Generally, news providers must spend a significant amount of time building trust with its readership.

22. BuzzFeed stated that there have been several documented cases of influence by media proprietors on editorial coverage in UK newspapers.
23. BuzzFeed stated that there has been some suppression of good quality reporting in the media industry. It is therefore important that a plurality of media exists for the expression of as many viewpoints as possible.