

News Corp aggregator aims to break free from tech platforms

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News Corp CEO Robert Thompson says the group's news aggregation application will offer content from a variety of sources and will be free from "filter bubbles"

Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. on Wednesday unveiled an online news aggregation service, aiming to break away from the tech platforms that dominate digital media.

The application called Knewz, now being tested, will include content from more than 400 sources in the US and worldwide, including Al-Jazeera, The Washington Post and Murdoch's own Fox News.

A News Corp statement said the app will offer "the latest news from the widest variety of sources, free of filter bubbles and narrow-minded nonsense."

If successful, the project could steer readers away from major tech platforms such as Google and Facebook, which scoop up the majority of online ad revenues and user data.

"Knewz is unique in that readers can, at a single glance, see multiple sources," said Robert Thomson, chief executive of News Corp.

"It is not egregious aggregation but generous aggregation. There are mastheads from across the political and regional spectrum, and premium publishers will not be relegated in the rankings."

Knewz combines "cutting edge, proprietary artificial intelligence with experienced editors" and curates "a selection of headlines that provide a broad perspective on stories of the day."

The outlets available include the British-based BBC and Daily Mail, Al Jazeera and dozens of US-based organizations including BuzzFeed, Mother Jones and The Washington Post.

"Readers will have access to publishers large and small, niche and general, located in all 50 states," Thomson said.

"We live in a world of vexatious verticals, of crass clickbait, of polarized perspectives and fallacious, fact-free feeds—Knewz is knowing and needed."



The Washington is among the news organizations whose content will be included on an aggregator being created by Rupert Murdoch's News Corp

Sharing with publishers

Knewz "will share as much data as possible with publishers, ensuring that they have every opportunity to monetize their content," the statement said.

The new service will be up against aggregation applications from Apple, Google and Facebook, which face criticism for gleaning user data that is not shared with news organizations.

News Corp. has been among the fiercest critics of big tech firms, claiming that they take advantage of news organizations without adequate compensation.

But last year it joined in a project with Facebook, which unveiled a plan that would compensate publishers whose content is available on the social network.

News Corp is part of the media empire created by the Australian-born Murdoch which includes the Wall Street Journal and dailies in Britain and Australia. Murdoch, 88, is the executive chairman and his son Lachlan is co-chairman. The family also controls Fox Corp which includes the cable news outlet Fox News.

Damian Radcliffe, a University of Oregon journalism professor, said Knewz has assembled an impressive group of news outlets and offers some potential for news organizations struggling in the digital environment.

"This looks like an effort to create a news aggregator that isn't reliant upon Silicon Valley, and the whims of the algorithms, and revenue models which underpin those platforms," Radcliffe said.

It remains unclear whether the new service will be able to break the so-called filter bubbles that readers find themselves in to reinforce their views, said former USA Today editor Ken Paulson, who is now on the faculty at Middle Tennessee State University.

"I wish them well, but I have to wonder whether the average user, given a choice among coverage by

Fox News, Mother Jones or The Washington Post won't simply gravitate to their usual source," Paulson said.

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