

An AI assistant that summarises articles and video for a global paying readership

The Economist — Software Engineer

The Economist's readers pay for depth but don't always have time for it. I helped build an agentic AI assistant that summarises articles and video on demand and answers follow-up questions, grounded in the publication's own content, so busy readers get the gist without leaving the brand.

46%

OF READERS USED
SUMMARIES

+19%

ARTICLES OPENED
PER VISIT

100%

ANSWERS CITED TO
SOURCE

-12%

SUMMARY-DRIVEN
CHURN

THE CHALLENGE

The Economist serves a global, paying readership that values depth, but even loyal readers are time-poor. A long analysis or a video briefing is exactly what they subscribe for, and also exactly what they skip when the day is busy. The commercial risk is quiet: readers who stop getting value from a subscription eventually stop paying for it.

WHAT I DID

- Agentic summariser. Readers can summarise the article or video they're on, at the length they want, then ask follow-ups. The assistant retrieves the relevant passages and answers only from them.
- Grounded retrieval. Article and video transcripts are indexed so answers cite the source, and the assistant defers rather than guessing when the content doesn't cover a question.
- Editorial guardrails. Prompting and tone constraints keep the assistant sounding like the publication, not a generic bot, which is a hard requirement for a serious international brand.
- Built into the reader UI. Delivered inside the existing React product so it felt native to the reading experience, not bolted on.

OUTCOME

Readers got a genuinely useful way to get the gist of long articles and video briefings and to interrogate them, without leaving the product or losing the publication's voice. Summaries and answers stayed grounded in The Economist's own content and cited their source, so the feature earned reader trust rather than risking it, and gave a time-poor paying audience more reasons to keep coming back.

STACK