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An Industry in Acceleration

Over the last decade, many dozens of research reports have studied the "future of media." From the digital web and programmatic advertising to citizen bloggers and the 24-hour news cycle, each new trend has put increasing pressure on traditional news media.

In recent years there have been bright spots, however. Even as print circulation and subscriptions continue to decline, digital subscriptions and native advertising offerings have staunched the bleeding in some regions—most notably the United States and Nordic countries. In the United States, for example, after the November 2016 elections, major news outlets reported growth of online subscriptions.

The New York Times added more than 500,000 digital subscriptions in 2016 – a 47% increase from 2015. The Wall Street Journal gained more than 150,000 digital subscriptions, a 23% increase from 2015. Yet paying subscriber rates is still abysmally low in many regions. The Reuters Institute Digital News Report found just 3% of consumers in the UK, Germany and France pay for any digital news service. In the US 8% pay for digital news, and in Denmark, Norway and Sweden, subscriber rates are over 10%.



Most major news media are experimenting with native advertising – with mixed success. A report from MediaRadar shows the Wall Street Journal's renewal rate for short-term native advertising campaigns (defined as those that run for less than six months) is 72%, and the cost of each campaign is estimated at \$75,000 per month. In addition to offering native advertising, media companies are also acquiring or launching custom media studios to serve their advertisers. The Financial Times, for example, bought Alpha Grid to create lucrative content for customers.

These bright spots, however, are too few compared to the new threats that have emerged over the past 18 months. The rise of fake news is causing havoc around the globe, not only in political circles

but also by damaging the reputation of the news media and journalists. The most infamous fake news debate is taking place in the United States, where claims of Russian meddling in the election of President Donald Trump have hijacked the news for months. Yet manufactured news controversies are brewing all over the globe, from a defamation campaign directed at a British businessman to evidence of Russia planting fake stories to sway Sweden's decision about whether to join Nato.

"The rise of fake news is causing havoc all over the globe, both in political circles but also by damaging the reputation of the news media and journalists."



The result? A growing mistrust of the news media, which at best is accused of shoddy journalism and at worst an intentional bias in news reporting. Almost a third (29%) of those surveyed by Reuters Institute in 2017 say they habitually avoid the news, both because it affects their mood, and because they worry they cannot trust what they read online. And the Edelman Trust Barometer in 2017 documented a "precipitous" drop in the reputation of the media; "trust in media" fell to 43% worldwide, representing an all-time low in 17 countries.

We wondered, in this environment, how do journalists feel about their profession? While many reports have looked at consumers' attitudes about the media, far fewer ask journalists to share their point of view – particularly since the most recent crisis of trust.

Given our organization's role in the media ecosystem, we also studied the attitudes and ideas of PR professionals. How can PR, communications, and marketing professionals engage more effectively with embattled journalists and the media? What prescriptive advice do journalists have for brand-side professionals trying to reach them?

The result is a one-of-a-kind comparative analysis of journalists' and PR professionals' attitudes towards the media industry.



Survey Methodology

Mynewsdesk conducted a quantitative survey in June 2017 of journalists, editors, freelancers and communicators from the United States, United Kingdom, Ireland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Finland, Australia and Canada. The survey garnered 3175 responses across two major categories: journalists (65%); and communications, PR, marketing professionals (35%).

A Crisis of Trust

When asked what issues journalists worry about most in their industry, the top two concerns are the economic viability of independent news (69%), and that organizations do not produce quality work as they used to (58%). These fears are well documented in other studies and are therefore not very surprising.

More interesting to us were journalists' ideas about trust and credibility. Half the journalists we surveyed fear the news media is no longer trusted as a reliable source of information. One-third worry about the effect of "fake news" on the news industry. And one-third cite media bias as a cause for alarm. These statistics are fairly shocking given that "fake news" has only become a common term in the last 12–18 months. (The advent of fake news as a serious socio-political issue first emerged in the election of President Duterte in the Philippines, but it gained wider attention during the 2016 presidential race in the United States. Since then fake news controversies have surfaced across the globe.)

Independent news organizations will not be financially viable	69%
Organizations do not produce quality work as they used to	58%
The news media is no longer trusted as a reliable source of information	50%
News organizations will become increasingly biased i.e. not show both sides of a story or argument	340%

33%

What issues worry you about the future of the news media and journalism?

*Answered by Journalist

The effect of "fake news" on my industry

"One in two journalists fear the news media is no longer trusted as a reliable source of information."

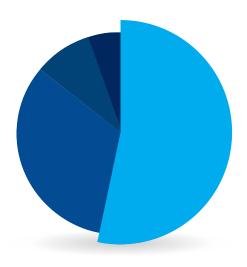
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Journalists see trust in reporting as a vexing issue. We wondered, however, to what extent journalists view the current fake news controversy as a long-term, intractable problem, or a short-term concern that can be solved. The survey shows more than one-half of journalists surveyed view fake news as a long-term problem, while approximately one-third say it's a short-term problem that can be solved. (Just 9% say it's not a problem and 5% say they "don't know.")

What are fake news fixes? Some governments are trying to regulate the problem, holding social networks accountable for the content their users share. In Germany, for example, social media companies can be fined up to €50 million if they fail to remove what is deemed illegal content, including obvious fake news. Germany's attention to the issue, however, is stricter than most have been willing to legislate.

The spread of fake news is made possible by the rapid-fire pace of sharing via social media, but poor vetting by non-traditional media companies also causes it – many with a particular point of view and a desire to influence others. Even traditional media outlets get caught sharing fake news. In a desire to report breaking news first, they publish stories before researching sources and getting second opinions. Once set loose on the internet, a fake story can be shared millions of times, even after the media company publishes a "correction." (When a news organization deletes a tweet, for example, any plain "retweet" is deleted automatically; however if a user shares the original tweet with added commentary, that tweet cannot be removed and is still shareable on the platform ... even after retraction.)

Do you think "fake news" is a long-term problem?



- Long-term problem 53%
- Short-term problem and can be solved 32%
- Not a problem 9%
- I don't know 5%

*Answered by Journalists

Also fueling the fake news fire is the consolidation of power with the largest social media networks, which are tremendously powerful news aggregators. Companies like Facebook and Twitter are now the channels people use to consume news - not the more carefully curated front page of news media sites. These companies hold tremendous power because, through their black-box algorithms, they have the ability to propagate ideas as well as suppress ideas. (Facebook is trying to combat the problem with a new feature called Related News, which provides additional links below trending news stories that provide alternate views or that examine the veracity of the story. It's a critical issue for Facebook because Reuters Institute research shows less than 1 in 4 believe social media does a good job separating fact from fiction.)

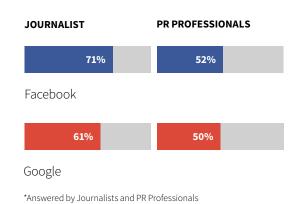
Our research shows journalists worry about the consolidation of power in the giant social media companies – an idea that's relatively new. Of the

journalists we surveyed, 71% believe Facebook has too much power as a source of information – and that figure jumps to 77% for those in the industry for less than seven years (presumably younger journalists). We asked the same question of PR professionals, and 52% shared the concern.

Journalists believe Google and YouTube (owned by Google) present a lesser threat, though still a sizeable threat. Globally, 61% say Google/YouTube has consolidated too much power. Interestingly, those with less experience (again, presumably younger) are less concerned by Google as an aggregator of information. PR professionals don't distinguish significantly between Facebook and Google/YouTube as threats; 50% say they worry Google/YouTube has consolidated too much power (compared to 52% who say the same for Facebook).



Do you worry Facebook and Google/Youtube have consolidated too much power as sources of information? Table shows those who have answered 'Yes'.



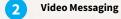
Top Four Technologies

Over the next 18 months, which of these new technologies/channels will be increasingly important to share news with the public?

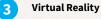


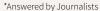














The Benefits of Live Streaming

Finally, we asked journalists which new technologies or channels will be most important when sharing news with the public over the next 18 months, and live streaming emerged as the top tactic (41% cited it). Offering viewers a 'behind-thescenes' insight into an organisation, live streaming is an opportunity to connect with audiences in a more real, more relatable and more accessible way than a highly edited video production. In response to today's crisis of trust, being perceived as authentic and transparent can be the key to a brand's success.

Video messaging was only cited by 30% of journalists. Overall, PR and marketing professionals give more credence to video messaging; 49% cite

it as a significant development. Interestingly, the 2017 Reuters Institute Digital News Report finds enthusiasm about video is flattening; fewer than half of respondents say they have watched a newsrelated video via social media in the last week—and of those who have watched news videos, the overwhelming majority are short news videos.

Technologies such as virtual reality (VR) and machine-generated content receive a lot of attention, yet journalists aren't particularly enamored of them... yet. Just 11% say machinegenerated content will be an important way to share news over the next 18 months, and only 10% cite VR. Not surprisingly, brand-side PR and communications give these media more weight,

particularly because brand content creators have been early adopters of VR, such as 360 videos; 19% of PR professionals say VR will be increasingly important over the next 18 months.

Differences by region were significant for this question. For example, 42% of journalists from Nordic countries cite live streaming as a major communications channel, while 36% of those from the DACH region (Austria, Germany, and Switzerland) cite it. And 33% of Nordic respondents say video messaging will be important, while just 26% of those in English-speaking countries mentioned it.

Are Journalists Ready to Work for Brands?

While some journalists are hesitant when it comes to working for brands, others are making the career move. Rajiv Chandrasekaran, the former national editor of the Washington Post, is perhaps the most famous journalist to transition from a career in the news media to creating content for brands. A highly esteemed correspondent covering the war in Afghanistan, Chandrasekaran has written an award-winning book about the Iraq war called Imperial Life in the Emerald City. Today, he develops documentary-style stories for Starbucks. This is just one example – many journalists have made the

move, departing coveted media companies such as Wired and Newsweek to work on behalf of commercial brands.

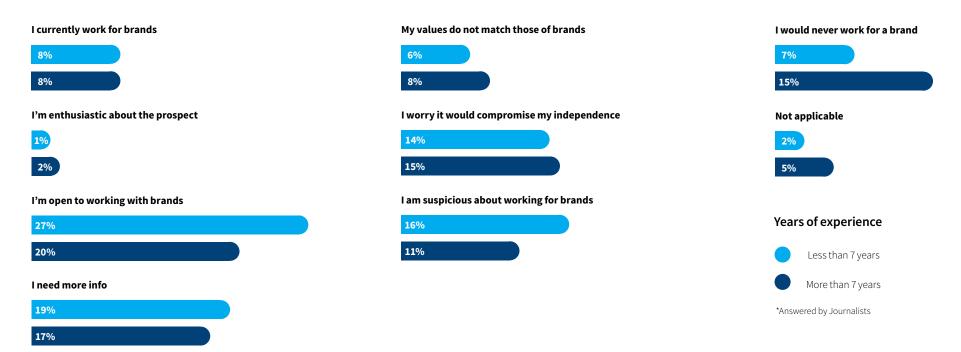
It's a trend that looks set to continue. We identified many journalists who are already working on behalf of brands or are contemplating the opportunity, and there is clearly a strong demand for their skills among non-media companies.

Our survey found 8% of journalists are currently working for brands and 23% of journalists are "open" or "enthusiastic" about the idea of working on behalf of a brand. It's a transition that makes sense. Like news reporting, brand storytelling requires skills such as researching, editing and presenting stories through a variety of media, and engaging and maintaining an audience's attention. In addition, it represents a growing job market – 36% of non-media companies currently employ/retain journalists for brand storytelling – and the demand for journalists looks set to rise with 29% of non-media companies believing that recruiting journalists for brand storytelling is a good idea. Only 10% say it's not a good fit within their organizations.

However, some journalists expressed concern that working with a brand would compromise their independence, or felt their values simply don't match those of commercially motivated companies. It's interesting that more senior journalists expressed these sentiments compared with their younger peers, something which might indicate that more education around the – relatively new – concept of brand storytelling is required: 17% of journalists who responded to the survey say they need more information.



How would you feel about putting your skills to work on behalf of a brand, i.e. blogging for a branded media site, writing for a brand magazine, etc.?



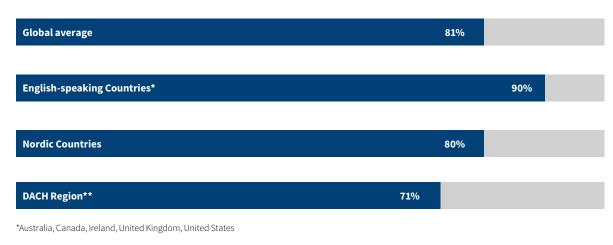
The Trust Gap

Even while most journalists believe brands publish information that's too self-serving and too promotional, brand professionals say their organizations are a trusted source of information.

Our research shows a sizeable gap between what PR professionals think about their work versus journalists' point of view on the matter, although both agree that content from brands is often too self-serving.

"Journalists view my brand as a trusted source of information."

Table shows communicators who have answered 'Yes'.



**Austria, Germany, Switzerland

Journalists' Advice for PR/Brands

Why do some journalists have a negative view of brand storytelling, and what can communications professionals do to improve their relationship with journalists?

The data reveals three key issues: journalists say content from brands is simply too self-serving (60%), and they contend PR professionals are always looking to sell something (55%). Additionally, they say stories from brands lack journalistic discipline (48%).

Credibility is the key factor here, and it's not something that can be gained by the "spray and pray" method of disseminating brand stories.

Journalists have a clear message for those

working in communications – put in the effort to customize a pitch to the individual writer's needs. Pitches should be industry specific, localized and customized to the needs of a news media's audience. Mass-produced or wide news angles don't work.

Interestingly, there was significant variation between countries/regions with regards to the types of stories that are most useful to journalists. In English-speaking countries, customizing the pitch to local needs is much more important, as is pitching editorial-quality stories rather than promotional information. While in the DACH countries, supporting multimedia content is relatively more important than in the other countries/regions we studied.



Journalist top three gripes about PR content:

- 1. Content from brands are too self-serving (60%).
- 2. Non-media communicators are always looking to sell something (55%).
- 3. Stories from brands lack journalistic discipline (48%).

PR top three gripes about in-house content:

- 1. Content from brands are too self-serving (52%).
- 2. Brands don't take any risks, so the content is uninteresting (40%).
- 3. Communicators inside non-media companies are always looking to sell something (40%).

In what areas can PR professionals improve their outreach according to journalists?

	English-speaking Countries*	Nordic Countries	DACH Region**
Customize your pitch to my needs	68%	52%	61%
Pitch editorial stories rather than product/brand news stories	61%	45%	41%
Include supporting media (e.g. video, photo) with pitch	35%	32%	39%
Reduce the quantity of information you send to journalists/media	a 25%	25%	37%
Reduce the length of pitches	29%	28%	24%
Only pitch me if you have an existing relationship with me	8%	11%	23%
Increase the quantity of information you send to journalists/med	ia 12%	11%	10%

^{*}Australia, Canada, Ireland, United Kingdom, United States

What factors define whether you investigate or follow up on a story pitch?

(Results were ranked according to order of importance .)





Credibility of the individual or company that pitched story





Opportunity to interview an opinion leader, or quality of quotes provided with pitch





Efficiency of extracting information from a source





Availability of supporting media

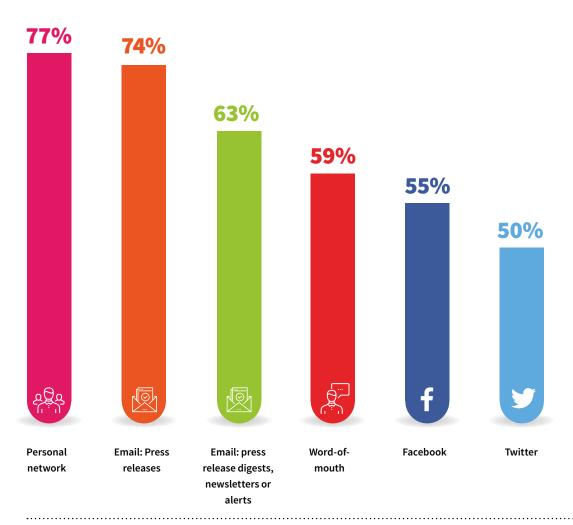
*Answered by Journalists

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^{**}Austria, Germany, Switzerland

On which channels do you research/source your stories on a regular basis?

* Mark all that apply. Answerd by Journalists



Disruptive Change, the New Normal

This period of drastic change impacts all of us with ties to the industry—from editors and journalists to PRs and brand marketers—and it's imperative we remain open-minded to the ways in which disruption can signal opportunity.

The way consumers access news is constantly evolving, and it's essential we find ways to establish credibility and rebuild the public's trust in media outlets. Also key is the role technology plays in curating news. In recent months the usefulness and adoption of chatbots has exploded. Chatbots are apps that simulate human conversation and engage in conversation through instant messaging platforms such as WeChat and Messenger. In early applications, businesses used chatbots for simple customer service interactions online, but the apps

are now used for everything from entertainment to delivering highly customized news reports to users. Reuters Institute reports over 30,000 bots have been created on Facebook Messenger since the program launched in April 2016.

Or consider the role of virtual assistants like Amazon's Alexa or Siri from Apple. These Alpowered search engines will disrupt yet again the way we consume news (e.g. "Siri, what's happening in the stock market today?"). The race is on among makers of virtual assistant technologies like Google Home, Alexa and Echo from Amazon, Siri from Apple and Microsoft Cortana to become the defacto choice for consumers, and therefore control the search results for users of that technology.



What makes all these changes so interesting is the extent to which algorithms will replace editors of arbiters of what news stories are relevant or important. Research from Reuters Institute shows more than half of respondents (54%) prefer news channels where the content has been chosen by an algorithm rather than an editor or journalist (44%). The ratio is even more pronounced for those who primarily use smartphones (58%) and for younger users (64%).

In addition to the public's relationship with and perception of news organisations, the importance of establishing mutually beneficial relationships between PR professionals and journalists during these rapidly changing times cannot be underestimated.

Our research shows deadline-crunched journalists are looking to brand communicators for stories and not sales pitches, while the ability of PR professionals to effectively build personal networks and craft compelling press releases will make all the difference to the amount of coverage they are able to secure. In addition, our research reveals that some journalists are making the move to brand storytelling, and that more education and outreach is likely needed to explain the benefits of working on behalf of content-producing brands.

So how should we move forward? With 2018 fast approaching, which will no doubt throw up a fresh set of challenges and opportunities, savvy journalists and communicators will need to work together in order to identify and respond to new media trends, take advantage of fresh channels, and establish credibility for both media outlets and brands.





1. Invest in editorial-quality content.

Marketing departments have been making this argument for years, but it bears repeating: Promotional content will not engage audiences and interest journalists. Journalists in our survey spoke clearly: Don't spread content that's self-serving. Share content that's useful, well researched, vetted by experts and expertly crafted. Make the job of journalists easier by telling the types of stories they would want to publish. Are we declaring an end to all self-serving press releases? Of course not. But consider the 80/20 rule. For every piece of content you post or share that is promotional, you should publish four more stories that are not self-serving. To attract attention, think like a journalist and not as a corporate envoy.

2. Before hiring a journalist, ensure cultural fit.

While content-savvy brands may be interested in hiring journalists, clearly some journalists are still reluctant to work for brands. Hiring a quality journalist won't be easy. Before even considering the move, ask whether a journalist would be satisfied working for your organization. Do you currently publish high-quality content that a journalist would be proud to add to their portfolio? Will they feel inspired to write for your company? Or are you asking a journalist to join your team to rub off on others? If your answer is the latter, don't bother. The relationship will not succeed unless your organization is already on the path of publishing high-quality content.



3. Become a trusted source.

Journalists responding to our survey say PR only gets in touch when they have something to sell. Who can blame them for not responding to pitches? Get in the habit of providing useful information to journalists – even if it isn't related to your company.

Michael Frazier, the former journalist and now head of marketing and communications for the National September 11 Memorial & Museum in the United States, told CCO magazine, "When I was a journalist, people called me all the time. They might have had something great to give me, but it got lost in white noise." When Frazier moved from journalist to marketer, he committed to being helpful. "I've sent short emails, texted and messaged journalists commenting on stories they've covered that were unrelated to the memorial and museum

but that I thought were handled really well," says Frazier. "These brief, important connections help journalists understand what your interests are and allow you to learn more about their approach to stories. Creating an environment for discovery is critical. It fosters a relationship where reporters now instinctively seek you out for comment on a multitude of topics that are mutually beneficial in terms of coverage."

4. Hang out where journalists source their stories.

To get attention from journalists, seek out the channels they prefer to source stories. Not surprisingly, journalists cite their personal networks as the most powerful to source stories, followed by emailed press releases, digests, newsletters and alerts.

Facebook is much less influential than it was even a year ago due to the fake news scandal, and we believe it will continue to fall from favor (though it is still the single most important social media channel on average across the countries we surveyed). Be aware of country-level preferences, such as Nordics' preference for sourcing stories on Facebook compared to the English-speaking countries we surveyed. Also be aware of agerelated differences. Reddit is much more likely to interest younger journalists, for example, while older journalists are more apt to choose emailed digests, newsletters, and alerts.

5. Experiment carefully with new technologies and digital media.

Experts may tell you to watch the rise of chatbots, augmented reality or machine-generated content to reach audiences, but ultimately the types of technologies you use to publish content should match what journalists actually use and prefer.

Journalists are optimistic about the importance of live streaming (40% of journalists from English-speaking countries say live streaming will be an increasingly important way to share news over the next 18 months), but just only one in 10 give any credence to VR applications.

6. Treat your credibility as an asset.

Just as journalists are undergoing a crisis of trust given the news of the last 18 months, so too are PR and marketing experiencing a similar crisis. The ways companies get attention online – from native advertising that doesn't clearly state its commercial ties to programmatic advertising that misuses consumer information – has garnered criticism from the public and regulatory bodies. Communications professionals are beholden to promote their organizations in a way that doesn't hijack attention, but rather earns it based on creating and publishing useful, credible and engaging content. There is much common ground between journalists and PR professionals as they navigate the path to building trust through wellresearched, vetted, crafted content.



Appendix

What issues worry you about the future of the news media and journalism?

	Global Average	Sweden	Finland	Denmark	Norway	UK	Germany	US
Independent news organizations will not be financially viable	69%	64%	68%	72%	80%	71%	70%	67 %
The news media is no longer trusted as a reliable source of information	50%	53%	55%	54%	40%	38%	48%	57 %
Organizations do not produce quality work as they used to	58%	56%	48%	52%	57%	63%	58%	58%
News organizations will become increasingly biased, i.e. not show both sides of a story or argume	nt. 34%	30%	29%	24%	32%	38%	35%	37%
The effect of "fake news" on my industry	33%	37%	39%	39%	24%	28%	31%	34 %

*Answered by Journalists

How would you feel about putting your skills to work on behalf of a brand, i.e. blogging for a branded media site, writing for a brand magazine,

	Global Average	Sweden	Finland	Denmark	Norway	UK	Germany	US
I currently work for brands	8%	9%	15%	10%	2%	11%	8%	7%
l'm enthusiastic about the prospect	2%	2%	5%	1%	0,7%	5%	0,6%	2%
I'm open to working with brands	21%	14%	26%	17%	11%	31%	21%	22%
I need more info	17%	8%	15%	18%	5%	12%	17%	24%
I worry it would compromise my independence	14%	11%	15%	20%	16%	14%	19%	13%
I am suspicious about working for brands	12%	17%	15%	8%	16%	9%	7%	12%
My values do not match those of brands	7%	8%	5%	7%	16%	2%	11%	5%
I would never work for a brand	14%	27%	4%	16%	30%	11%	10%	9%
Not applicable	4%	4%	0%	4%	1%	4%	7%	6%

*Answered by Journalists

Do you worry Facebook has consolidated too much power as a source of information?

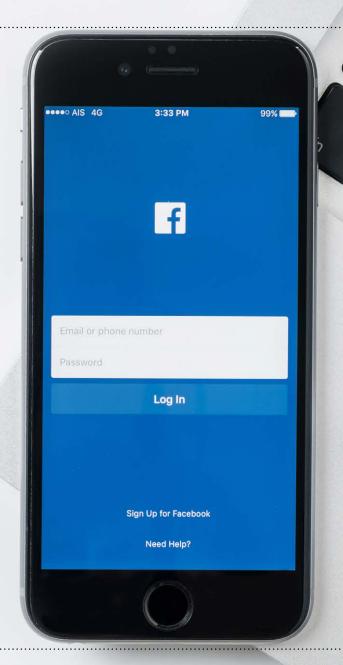
Years of experience	Less than 7 years	7–15 years	More than 15 years
Yes	77.37 %	68.67%	71.17 %
No	16.79 %	20.25%	18.54%
I don't know	5.84%	11.08%	10.30 %

^{*}Answerd by Journalists

Do you worry Google/YouTube has consolidated too much power as a source of information?

Years of experience	Less than 7 years	7–15 years	More than 15 years
Yes	58.39 %	54.75 %	63.50%
No	29.20 %	31.65 %	25.51%
l don't know	12.41%	13.61%	10.98 %

^{*}Answered by Journalists



On which channels do you research/source your stories on a regular basis? (Mark all that apply.)

	Global Average	US, UK, CA, AUS & IR	Scandinavia	DACH
Personal network	76.49%	73.97%	77.14%	84.50%
Email: Press releases	74.07%	75.96%	68.59%	79.50%
Email: press release digests, newsletters or alerts	62.81%	61.41%	62.12%	69.50%
Word-of-mouth	58.59%	59.42%	59.35%	57.50%
Facebook	55.40%	49.92%	68.36%	47.50%
Twitter	50.11%	51.61%	49.42%	45.50%
Blogs	32.73%	32.77%	33.49%	34.00%
Google alerts	27.82%	35.53%	13.63%	31.50%
YouTube	25.93%	22.82%	28.41%	33.00%

^{*}Answered by Journalists